

HANSEI UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**THE LUTHERAN CHORAL
TRADITION:**

**A STUDY ON THE HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF THE
PRINCIPLES, CHORAL SOUND AND PHILOSOPHY**

By

Ryan Steven Orlando Goessl

GUNPO, KOREA

2015

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THE LUTHERAN CHORAL TRADITION:
A STUDY ON THE HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF THE
PRINCIPLES, CHORAL SOUND AND PHILOSOPHY

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate Professional Committee

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting
In the Graduate School of Hansei University, Gunpo City, Korea

By

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Hansei University

2015

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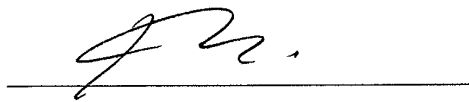
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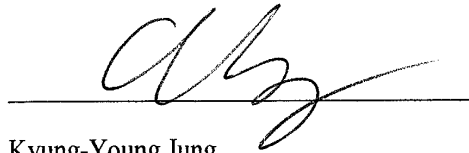
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ABSTRACT

The Lutheran Choral Tradition:
A Study on the Historical Progression of the Choral Sound, Principles, and
Philosophy

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The Lutheran Choral Tradition was, and still is, at the forefront of the modern choral world. The tradition originated in the Midwest of the United States, with the arrival of F. Melius Christiansen to the United States, and his founding of the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir in 1911, now known as the St. Olaf Choir. The tradition spread quickly to other colleges, the most notable being Luther College (Decorah, IA), Concordia College (Moorhead, MN), Augustana College (Rock Island, IL), Augsburg College (Minneapolis, MN), and Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma, WA). The tradition has thrived, and has continued through the Scandinavian-American Lutheran College

choirs to the current day. This paper will focus on the “Power 3” schools: St. Olaf Choir, Luther College Nordic Choir, and the Concordia Choir, with an emphasis on the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of the various choirs of the “Power 3” schools.

The purpose of this study is to (1) review the historical development of the Lutheran Choral Tradition from its onset to current day, (2) identify the major influential people in the choral field, along with their contributions to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, (3) document traditional styles, philosophies and practice in the Lutheran Choral Tradition, (4) identify the philosophies responsible for the choral sounds of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, focusing on the past and current choral sounds of the “Power 3” colleges, with emphasis on the aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional qualities of the “Power 3” colleges, and (5) identify that, although not from the same lineage in regards to teacher-student, all conductors share a lineage in regards to spirituality, emotion, and numerous other aesthetic qualities in the “Power 3” choirs.

This study emphasizes the importance of the Lutheran Choral Tradition to not only the history of choral music in Scandinavian-American Lutheran colleges, but to the overall choral sound in the United States. The study represents the first investigation of identifying techniques and overall choral sound of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, with emphasis on spirituality, vulnerability, and emotion. The study is based on first-hand interviews with

present and past leading conductors in the tradition at each of the “Power 3” schools, first and second-hand interviews with past leading conductors, interviews with singers under the tutelage of past conductors, historical accounts of the schools and choirs, and observations on live performances, videos, and audio recordings of the “Power 3” schools throughout the eras of each leading conductor.

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LIST OF RECORDING REFERRALS

St. Olaf Choir:

1. Christmas in Norway with the St. Olaf Choir (2013)
2. Norge Mitt Norge
3. Great Hymns of Faith, volumes 1, 2, 3
4. My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord
5. Harmony: American Songs of Faith
6. Sing for Joy
7. Seoul Olympic Arts Festival
8. Portrait of the Orient
9. Choral Masterworks Series, vol. 1 (F. Melius Christiansen)
10. Choral Masterworks Series, vol. 2 (Olaf Christiansen)
11. Choral Masterworks Series, vol. 3, 4 (Kenneth Jennings)

Concordia Choir:

1. The Worlds Above
2. Life and Breath
3. High Flight – The King's Singers and the Concordia Choir
4. Beauty in the World
5. Faire is the Heaven
6. Evocations
7. F. Melius Christiansen 135th Anniversary Concert
8. 50 years with Paul J. Christiansen
9. Memorial
10. Choral Music of René Clausen
11. Folk Songs, Spirituals & Hymns

Luther College Nordic Choir:

1. Christmas at Luther (2014)
2. Prayer
3. Go, Lovely Rose
4. Holy, Radiant Light

5. Here I Am, Lord
6. Culmination of an Extraordinary Career
7. Everlasting Light
8. I Sing as I Arise
9. In the Beginning
10. I Will Sing to the Lord
11. We Sing With Joy

CHAPTER I.

PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND DEFINITIONS

1.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To identify and define the Lutheran Choral Tradition that was born in the early twentieth century in the Midwest United States, originating with F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir.
 - a. What was the F. Melius Christiansen choral concept?
 - b. What were F. Melius Christiansen's influences?
 - c. Identify the sound of an F. Melius Christiansen choir.
2. To distinguish the characteristics of the early Lutheran Choral Tradition (Christiansen Choral Tradition) from the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition, noting influential conductors and programs.
 - a. Identify the choral concepts of the Christiansen era.
 - b. Identify the work of Olaf Christiansen and Paul J. Christiansen, including choral concept, ideal tone color, and influences.
3. To assert the entrance of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition.

- a. Identify the progression of the choral sound and technique from the onset of F. Melius Christiansen to modern day.
 - b. Identify leaders of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition, and their influence on the tradition.
4. To identify the common practice and theory, focusing on the aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional qualities of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, coupled with basic technical aspects incorporated by each conductor, past and present, and assert the effect of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition, with distinction given to the leaders of the “Power 3” schools, on the choral field, with emphasis on the role of the conductor, choir, and music.

The structure of this study is as follows:

Firstly, this study will review and give historical significance to the founding of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, beginning with F. Melius Christiansen in the early twentieth century, continuing to the formation of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition of current day. The focus will begin with F. Melius Christiansen’s background and influences, leading him to the founding of the St. Olaf Choir, being furthered by his son Olaf at St. Olaf College, and Paul J. at Concordia-Moorhead College. The study will explore the branching

out of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, specifically in regards to Concordia College and Luther College. Historical significance will also be given to Weston Noble (Luther College), Kenneth Jennings (St. Olaf), Anton Armstrong (St. Olaf), René Clausen (Concordia-Moorhead), Craig Arnold (Luther College) and Allen Hightower (Luther College).

Secondly, this study will document traditional styles, philosophies, and concepts in the Lutheran Choral Tradition of the past to present, in regards to the sought-after sounds of the conductors of the “Power 3” schools (St. Olaf College, Concordia-Moorhead College, and Luther College).

Finally, this study will identify a common general philosophy and practice in the Lutheran Choral Tradition throughout the “Power 3” schools, focusing on implementation of the choral style in the view of the conductor, choir members, and specific choral sound in the current day, in regards to the mission and goals of the Lutheran Choral Tradition. This focus will identify emotion and vulnerability as the core of the modern-day Lutheran Choral Tradition, redefining the Lutheran Choral Tradition to be based on these aspects.

1.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary sources of data are audio-recorded and transcribed interviews with current living leaders in the Lutheran Choral Tradition, occurring between the author and the interviewee, from February 2014 to November 2014.¹ The interviews explore the topic of the Lutheran Choral Tradition in the eyes of the interviewee, and provide information of their view of the tradition, their implementation, and their concept. Interviews with other choral professionals, including former students of the “Power 3” schools, professionals in other Lutheran schools, along with books by the interviewees, books about the colleges, past academic writings, and recordings will be utilized to further identify the Lutheran Choral Tradition.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.3.1 *DEFINING “CHORAL SCHOOL”*

In “Choral Conducting: A Symposium” renowned conductor and educator Howard Swan outlined six schools of choral music:²

School A – John Finley Williamson, Westminster Choir College – A choral tone that is alive, vital, and responsive is secured by emphasizing and

¹ Interviews are transcribed in full and attached in Appendix A of this paper.

² Howard Swan. “The Development of a Choral Instrument,” in *Choral Conducting, A Symposium, 2nd ed.*, ed. H. A. Decker and J. Herford. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc). 7-68.

encouraging the physical and the emotional development of each singer in the choir. To a considerable degree the director is concerned with the growth of the individual – personally, intellectually, and musically – and gives somewhat less attention to the needs of the group. The success of a chorus has an immediate relationship to the achievement of each individual in it.

School B – Father William J. Finn – A singer’s tone is like the color of an orchestral instrument and should be developed accordingly.

School C – F. Melius Christiansen, St. Olaf Choir – Every singer in the chorus has a primary responsibility to subordinate his own ideas concerning tone production, rhythmic stress, and pronunciation to the blended and unified sound made by the total ensemble.

School D – Fred Waring – By following the natural laws of good speech that are related to proper pronunciation and articulation, a singer and an ensemble can develop a beautiful quality of tone.

School E – Joseph J. Klein, Douglas Stanley, and John C. Wilcox – Good tone quality is induced by the physical motivation of an individual or a chorus. It is the consequence of a perfectly executed coordination of the entire vocal mechanism.

School F – Robert Shaw – Good tone has three concomitants: a rhythmic drive subordinated to the demands of a score, a knowledge on the part of the conductor and singer of the shape of a musical phrase, and an understanding of the laws of vocal energy as they may be applied to a musical composition.

Although complete in the early/mid-twentieth century, these choral schools have become dated, and the choral field has branched out into many different directions. In this study, the choral concept in regards to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, along with being used in the sense above, will be updated to reflect the tradition of current day.

1.3.2 *DEFINING “POWER 3” SCHOOLS*

Although many strong programs are included in the genre of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, the author identifies St. Olaf College, Concordia College (Moorhead, Minnesota) and Luther College as the three top Lutheran Choral Tradition programs, based on historical tradition, commitment to excellence, and general acceptance of these three schools as leaders and innovators of the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Therefore, in this study, the aforementioned schools will be referred to collectively as the “Power 3” schools.

1.3.3 *DEFINING “LUTHERAN CHORAL TRADITION”*

The Lutheran Choral Tradition refers to the choral style, philosophy, and practice of the “Power 3” schools: St. Olaf College, Concordia-Moorhead College, and Luther College. The three schools are sister schools founded on the Scandinavian-American Liberal Arts tradition, and are undergraduate institutions only.

The Lutheran Choral Tradition, was born under the guidance of F. Melius Christiansen, whose choral philosophy can be summed up briefly by Swan’s definition in 1.3.1. Upon retiring, Olaf Christiansen, son of F. Melius, took over St. Olaf Choir, followed by Kenneth Jennings and Anton Armstrong, while F. Melius’ other son, Paul J. began the Concordia Choir, followed by René Clausen. Meanwhile, at Luther College, Weston Noble

brought the Luther College Nordic Choir to international prominence, and was followed by Craig Arnold and Allen Hightower.

When referring in this study to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, the author will refer to the subset of techniques, philosophies, and practices of the early tradition, being that of F. Melius and his sons, as the “Christiansen Choral Tradition.” The term “Lutheran Choral Tradition” will refer to the tradition in general within the “Power 3” schools, with a focus on the later twentieth century to current day (2014).

1.3.4 DEFINING SCANDINAVIAN AND SCANDINAVIAN-AMERICAN INFLUENCE

Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American influence refers to the mission of the “Power 3” colleges. In a publication by Paul Benson on the *A Cappella Choirs in the Scandinavian-American Lutheran Colleges*, the author states “Bringing America the beauty of mixed a cappella choral singing is the undisputed contribution to American culture of a small band of Scandinavian-American Lutheran college choirs on the Midwestern prairies. They are the American progenitors of an art form which, though a transplant from Europe, took root in the culture of the Scandinavian-American pioneers. Although unaccompanied choral singing was featured in the cathedrals and churches of Europe prior to the Reformation, it was in America and among

these Scandinavian-American Lutheran colleges that the a cappella choir was transformed into a concert instrument, the touring mixed choral ensemble.”³

Immigrants from Scandinavia, and Norway in particular, settled in the Midwestern area of the United States, particularly in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Northern Iowa, founding many prominent liberal arts institutions, including the “Power 3”.

The focus of this paper is on the progression of the Scandinavian influence, introduced by F. Melius Christiansen, in the “Power 3” schools, documenting the choral concepts sought after by the prominent conductors, and establishing a theory in the practice of choral music in today’s Lutheran Choral Tradition.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The amount of information written on the topic was quite limited and dated in nature. A large amount of time needed to be dedicated to further study, interviews, auditing of rehearsals, review and analysis of recordings and videos, and discussions with other music colleagues and professionals. The lack of firsthand accounts due to the absences (death) of the pioneers of the Lutheran Choral Tradition creates a gap in the study that is only known

³ Paul Benson, “A Cappella Choirs in the Scandinavian-American Lutheran Colleges,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 32 (1989): 221, http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume32/vol32_12.htm.

through written and recorded accounts. The “Power 3” schools, although leading institutions in the Lutheran Choral Tradition in the United States of America, do not comprise the whole of the Lutheran College and Lutheran Chorale experience. For purposes of length, some significant schools have been left out of the written portion of this study, although they have been thoroughly reviewed, and passively included. These schools include: Gustavus Adolphus College (Minnesota), Wartburg College (Iowa), Augustana College (Rock Island, Illinois, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota), Augsburg College (Minnesota), and Pacific Lutheran University (Washington).

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The importance of this research lies in the uniqueness of the research itself. The Lutheran Choral Tradition has not been thoroughly researched in recent years, and previous research projects, papers and published articles fail to thoroughly investigate the development of the theory and practice of the Lutheran Choral Tradition sound. These studies have also failed to provide an answer to the following questions 1. How do the Lutheran Choral Tradition choirs create the elite sound that they consistently produce year in and year out? 2. What steps and preparation do these choirs take to reach the pinnacle of their choral sound?

Furthermore, past studies have failed to define a specific theory that relates through the conductor and into the souls of each singer. This paper explores these questions, answering the questions proposed, and providing insight into the high level of success and artistry within the Lutheran Choral Tradition.

CHAPTER II

THE LUTHERAN CHORAL TRADITION: CONDUCTORS AND STYLES

2.1 F. MELIUS CHRISTIANSEN

2.1.1 *EARLY YEARS AND BEGINNING AT ST. OLAF COLLEGE*

Fredrik Melius Christiansen (F. Melius Christiansen), the founder of the St. Olaf Choir, was born at Smedhaugen in Berger, Norway on April 1, 1871. He was known as F. Melius due to the fact that he had an uncle named Fredrik who lived close by.⁴ He was born into a musical family, thus, music was a prominent and active part of his upbringing.

Soon after his arrival to the United States in 1888, at the age of seventeen, F. Melius Christiansen accepted an invitation with his brother Carl to travel to Washburn, Wisconsin in order to attend high school and work on his English skills. There, he continued in music, playing the baritone in the band conducted by his brother. Soon after, he worked for two years in

⁴ Leola Bergmann, *Music Master of the Middle West: The Story of F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1921), 118.

Marinette, Wisconsin, as a music teacher, organist and choir leader, before enrolling at Augsburg College in Minneapolis in 1891.⁵

F. Melius excelled at Augsburg in conducting and music theory, graduating at the top of his seventy-strong class, and followed as both the organist at Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, and conductor of a male chorus at Augsburg Seminary.

Upon his marriage to Edith Signora Lindem, they travelled back to Norway to visit relatives, continuing on to Leipzig, where F. Melius continued studying for the next two years with Gustav Schrek, who taught him composition and counterpoint. F. Melius' first intention of studying was the violin in Leipzig. "He practiced violin six hours a day. He also put in an hour or two each day on the piano, receiving instruction in that instrument from Alois Reckendorf.⁶ However, it was the required concerts of which all conservatory students were required to attend (Gewandhaus) that had the most profound effect on F. Melius. "He...would also hear the famous boys' choir, the *ThomanerChor*, on Saturday mornings when it presented a motet and on Sundays when it sang a cantata either at *Thomaskirche* or *Nicolaikirche*."⁷

⁵Robert Jennings, *A Study of the Historical Development of Choral Ensembles in Selected Lutheran Liberal Arts Colleges in the United States* (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1969), 21.

⁶Bergmann, *Music Master*, 75.

⁷Joseph Shaw, *The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative* (Northfield, MN: Northfield Printing, Inc.), 53-54.

Following his completion at the conservatory in Leipzig, F. Melius returned to Minneapolis, where he took a position teaching violin at Northwestern Conservatory, later becoming the chair of the string faculty. Soon after, in 1903, Christiansen was invited to St. Olaf College to head all music activities on the campus.⁸ At this time, he also became a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, where he brought the church choir to prominence.

It was during his first year that Christiansen proved himself to the leaders of the college. During this year, he was able to increase the faculty to four members, establish the school of music at the college and through his leadership the first year, a broad music course was offered.⁹ The trust that school leaders had in Christiansen was plentiful. That trust can be seen in the fact that the number of faculty increased to four: F. Melius Christiansen, Thonny Felland, Martha Larson, and Serine Eisteinson, and a school holiday was held on May 18 to allow for a music festival. Most importantly, as pointed out by Simpson in his book, "The courses in music are open as electives in any department of the college to those who show sufficient musical ability to pursue them with profit and receive the same credit as similar courses in other departments."¹⁰ The support of Christiansen was evident right away, and

⁸ Paul Benson, *High on Manitou: A History of St. Olaf College 1874-1949* (Northfield, MN: The St. Olaf College Press, 1949), 134.

⁹ Jennings, 24.

¹⁰ Eugene Simpson, *A History of St. Olaf Choir* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1921), 59.

continued to grow at a quick rate from the very beginning, which resulted in the creation of a program in music of the highest quality, evidenced by the amount of students enrolled from the onset of the program. “The total number of students at St. Olaf (in 1904) was 180, with sixty-three of them listed as music students.”¹¹

2.1.2 THE FOUNDING OF THE ST. OLAF CHOIR

The official founding of the St. Olaf Choir, in 1912, was in actuality a continuation of the St. John’s Church Choir, along with an influence from the St. Olaf Octet. The church choir, led by Christiansen since 1905, was a mixture of members of the congregation and St. Olaf students. “The St. John’s Church Choir was the most immediate precursor of the St. Olaf Choir.”¹² The choir found its success not only from the leadership of Christiansen, but also from the receptive atmosphere of everyone connected to the church, from the congregation to the college, to the St. Olaf College president, J.N. Kildahl, who regularly gave presentations and sermons in conjunction with Christiansen that would connect to the hymn being sung by the choir, while properly leading the congregation to further enjoy and more deeply understand the music being sung. The chorales were effectively

¹¹ Ibid., 63-64.

¹² Shaw, *The St. Olaf Choir*, 97.

“interspersed with sermonic comments by President Kildahl, (who was) regarded as one of the most forceful and effective preachers of his day.”¹³

The St. Olaf Octet was a mixed group of singers, led by Christiansen, that in many ways aided in the immediate success of the St. Olaf Choir. The octet sang music of the church that was very popular to the Norwegian-American churches and parishioners, albeit, at a high level of performance. In 1908, Christiansen founded and took this group on tour in order to promote the college to its patrons, demonstrate Lutheran chorales, and raise money. The choir went on tour that year, giving sixty-two concerts.¹⁴ This first tour to raise money and promote the college was the concept of the touring choir that has become one of the staples of the “Power 3” schools, and the general choral community of the modern day.

The success of these tours was immense. Even though the tours only raised \$400, the mission was accomplished. The tours advertised the college and the music program, and promoted the music popular to the Lutheran church. “There were no new or strange hymns among them – they were the very hymns we sang every Sunday in our churches... the air was tense and electric with feeling.”¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. 99.

¹⁵ Paul Maurice Glasoe, “A Singing Church,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 13 (1943): 92-107, http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume13/vol13_5.htm, 105.

The singing of music and texts popular in the Lutheran church was immense. “Our chorales are the best congregational songs we possess; but they ought to be sung in the tempo of a normal pulse beat; otherwise they will have a wearying effect.”¹⁶ The Lutheran church is known as the “singing church”, and it is no secret that Lutherans love to sing. One of the central activities in the Lutheran church was, “and is”, the singing of Lutheran hymns. Christiansen knew and understood this well. He arranged many popular Lutheran hymns for his choirs, and most of every choral program was comprised of arrangements of Lutheran hymns and music of the church.

The choir that led directly to the founding of the St. Olaf Choir was a combination of two choirs joining forces at St. John’s Church: The Ladies’ and Male Choruses. These two choruses joined together at St. John’s Church in a presentation of a song-service for President Kildahl and F. Melius Christiansen in 1911. Included in the concert were some of the “hits” of the Lutheran church: “Beautiful Savior”, “Praise to the Lord”, “Today There is Ringing”, and much more. The concert was so successful that “the choir received requests to sing in nearby congregations.”¹⁷

In 1912, with a tour in Wisconsin and Illinois during Easter vacation, the St. Olaf Choir was formed. This successful first tour of the choir led to

¹⁶ J. C. K. Preus, *The History of The Choral Union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church 1847-1960* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 38-39.

¹⁷ Shaw, 107.

numerous other choir tours, and the birth of the St. Olaf Choir and the Lutheran touring choir was born.

2.1.3. F. MELIUS CHRISTIANSEN AND HIS CHORAL CONCEPT



F. Melius Christiansen, circa 1926.

To say that F. Melius Christiansen was innovative in his concept of choral music would be a major understatement. Prior to the arrival of Christiansen to the choral scene in the United States, choirs were thought of as little more than clubs, with little talent. “The St. Olaf Lutheran Choir (came) onto the national scene at a time when most American colleges and high

schools were proud if [sic] their singing groups could perform such works as ‘Polly Wolly Doodle All the Day.’”¹⁸

What Christiansen brought to the choral scene was simple - a choir that can perform like an orchestra. That is, a choir that consistently stays in tune, performs the music the way the composer envisioned, and conveys a message to all its listeners. Christiansen emphasized, more than anything, blend. As was stated earlier in Swan’s assessment on choral schools, “Every singer in the chorus has a primary responsibility to subordinate his own ideas concerning tone production, rhythmic stress, and pronunciation to the blended and unified sound made by the total ensemble.”¹⁹ In other words, Christiansen stressed that a solo voice was not desirable. Rather, he strived to create a single, cohesive unit, working together, to create a common goal at the highest level of artistry possible as he saw fit.

Christiansen insisted that the singers alter their individual vocal tone to match what he deemed the ideal tonal sound of the section. He would have his sample section member, and build the rest of the section around them. The most successful singers were the ones that could easily and effectively alter their tone to match the sound that Christiansen strived for,

¹⁸ Benson, *A Cappella Choirs in the Scandinavian-American Lutheran Colleges*.

¹⁹ Swan.

without being heard above the choir.²⁰ Therefore, Christiansen would construct his sections by selecting one singer with a pleasant sounding, clear voice, produced with straight-tone, and ask other singers to match the tone of the first voice, building until he reached his ideal in the section with the forces he was offered. Christiansen was very committed to the concept of exceptional blend. He stated, “Soloists are what ruin choirs’ ... the boys and girls who come into this choir must be prepared to sacrifice individual glory. If they aren’t, we don’t want them. That is the only way to build a choir.”²¹

As for the color that was sought after by Christiansen, he emphasized a sound without a tremolo (vibrato). He preferred the sopranos with small voices that had a reed-like quality to the sound, mixing in a few flute-like voices. This is a concept that he brought over from Leipzig from his years of hearing the boys choir of the *Thomanerchor*, the sound he tried to employ in his sopranos. As for altos, Christiansen loved to hear a section that emulated a cello, a full sound that has a lot of color and

²⁰ F. Melius Christiansen, *School of Choir Singing*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1916).

²¹ *The Minneapolis Journal*, (Minneapolis, MN), December 9, 1928.

richness. With tenors, the sound should be smooth, but reed-like. His basses needed to be able to sing a low D effortlessly.²²

Furthermore, Christiansen needed a quite rich bass sound that had fullness and presence. The sound that came out of his basses was always confident, and powerful. There was confidence in the sound that was unmatched in any of the other sections. Due to Christiansen's weakness in vocal pedagogy, coupled with vocal pedagogy of the period, it was a sound, consistent in all sections, that often sounded forced or pressed, and had a tone color that was manufactured. The sound of the soprano, likewise of the basses, was a manufactured sound, most likely due to the constricting of voices to reach the ideal sound wanted by the conductor. The sound was a bit bright; however, there was a high sense of clarity and precision to pitch. The altos, in the author's opinion, reached the closest to Christiansen's ideal sound in a section. Although some voices were subordinated, the lower end of the spectrum allowed for a fuller sound, lending to less need for subduing one's own vocal sound and timbre to conform to the ideal. This allowed for a sound more free from tension, and gave the altos the cello-like quality that pleased Christiansen. The tenors had the reedy tone that Christiansen looked for, but due to a lack of vocal support and proper

²² Bergmann, 147-48.

pedagogy that is seen in the current tradition, the sound was forced in the upper extremities of the range, limiting the amount of blend with other sections.²³

One must keep in mind that Christiansen himself was not a singer, or teacher of singing. His background, studies, and expertise was as a violinist and a composer. Although he understood how to write for choir, he understood very little in regards to vocal technique. Rather, he knew the sound he wanted, and sought to acquire that tone. “When (Christiansen) went to Leipzig and heard the Leipzig Men and Boys Choir, he was so enamored by the beautiful tone of the boy sopranos, its purity and its pitch. So when he returned to St. Olaf (College), he announced to the sopranos that from now on “You’re going to sing like boys!” With his Norwegian accent, “You’re going to sing like boys!”²⁴

Christiansen was never one to do warm-ups, or discuss vocal technique in rehearsals. As soon as he entered the room, he was down to business, giving a starting pitch, and beginning. Christiansen was one to use imagery, which he incorporated often into his rehearsals.

²³ St. Olaf Choir, with F. Melius Christiansen. *Choral Masterworks Series, Vol. 1*, CD, St. Olaf Records, 1998.

²⁴ Weston Noble, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 12, 2014, transcript.

Once when the sopranos were singing with too heavy and dark a tone, [Christiansen] asked them to sing it more ‘pink,’ meaning light yet with color and warmth; and another time he wanted a high, floating tone to be ‘pure blue.’ After some particularly clumsy phrasing, he told the choir, ‘You sing as if you were throwing water out of a pail and splashing it against a wall, instead of letting it drop from a silver spool like little pearls.’ When the tenors had been singing with a thin, colorless tone, he barked at them, your notes are too *bony*, put some *meat* on them!”²⁵

Equally important was the attitude of the singers. Christiansen did not want divas/divos, but rather singers who conformed to the ideal sound wanted of the choir. Every singer sublimated not only their voices, but themselves for the greater needs of the choir. Individual glory was shunned upon, and is a point of view that has continued with the Lutheran Choral Tradition today. This created an atmosphere of dedication to the furthering of the choir’s musical goals. “Whether you agree or disagree with what [Christiansen] did vocally, he was able to create a very crack disciplined group.”²⁶ Later in his interview, Clausen refers to one of his student’s quotes in the choir’s concert program: “There’s a certain dynamic here. A lot of it is discipline that’s

²⁵ Bergmann, 161.

²⁶ René Clausen, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 12, 2014, transcript.

needed to create the technical and emotional engagement with the music.

There's a degree of sacrifice that's needed in order to sing every piece with all the conviction and precision we can muster. The thing is, we're all willing to make this sacrifice."²⁷ Every singer was, and is to the current day, willing to give up their personal desires while being a member of the group to be able to sing music at the highest artistic ability possible. F. Melius' singers needed to be willing to commit to the extensive rehearsal schedule, which was usually more than ten hours per week, not to mention the extensive touring that developed over Christiansen's tenure.

In regards to diction, Christiansen emphasized the vowels. Singing on the vowel for the longest time possible was essential, as vowels are where the choral tone resides. He took it to the point that occasionally the clarity of the written text would suffer in order to create the beautiful sound Christiansen searched for in a uniform vowel. Rather than creating a crisp, quick consonant within the text and at the beginning and end of words, the consonant itself was minimized.²⁸ The vowel itself was more "throaty" than that of future generations, and in current day, would be characterized often as "swallowed". The placement of the vowel further back in the buccal pharynx, around the oropharyngeal provided a more full sound to the vowel, providing depth and

²⁷ Ibid.

roundness that adhered to Christiansen's ideal of a blended sound with no singer standing out. However, it did provide the singer with tension issues, which contributed to the mechanical sound of the choir.

The placement of the choir members was also of major importance in Christiansen's choir, and still is today in the Lutheran Choral Tradition. He would situate members of the choir in such a fashion as to create a pure sound, achieve perfect blend, and to address the issue of balance. Christiansen usually had a college choir of approximately sixty singers. Generally, the men, due to a later start in school because of military service commitments, sang with a more mature, full sound. This, coupled with the usually younger women, provided a bit of a challenge. Also challenging was the consideration of heavier voices in sections versus lighter voices. Christiansen addressed this issue as shown in the following chart:

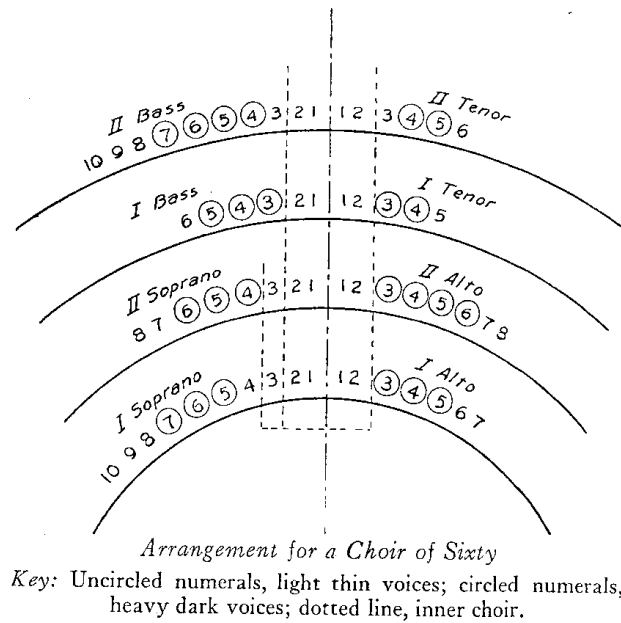


Figure 1. Standard formation of a F. Melius Christiansen choir²⁹

In the center of the choir, Christiansen placed many of his more advanced singers, who created the inner choir/semi-chorus. This choir was used to sing particularly soft passages, when it would be more feasible to use a smaller choir to achieve the demands of the music in the manner desired by Christiansen. He would then follow that by his heavier and darker singers, and on the end, his lighter voices. As seen, the choir was divided in four quadrants – sopranos in the front left, altos in the front right, tenors behind the altos, and basses behind the sopranos. Sopranos were the largest section of the ensemble, due to Christiansen’s desire of light, thin sounding sopranos. More basses were needed also to emphasize the root of the chords being sung.

²⁹ Bergmann, 155.

Overall, F. Melius Christiansen was a galvanizing, but humble man. He emphasized a strict discipline within his choir, musically and in discipline. Blend was of utmost importance, even to the point of sacrificing clarity of the text being sung. His musical style was very neo-romantic, with a large emphasis on delivering the message of the text. Due to this, he was very serious in his treatment of concerts. They were for the beauty of the music, and to deliver the art, not for casual enjoyment. He rarely spoke during a concert, as he felt that a concert should be music and nothing else. He insisted on a straight-tone in his choir, free of tremolos, with special attention given to the blend of vowels. In addition to the sound and blend he wanted, being heavily influenced by his studies in Leipzig, along with hearing the choirs of Europe, Germany and Norway specifically, Christiansen added to his choral concept. His innovations in the choral music field took the choral art out of the casual cellar, and into the spotlight, emphasizing superior musicality, and attention to the choral art.

2.2 OLAF CHRISTIANSEN

2.2.1. BEGINNING OF OLAF'S CAREER

Olaf Christiansen had a long relationship with St. Olaf College and the St. Olaf Choir. He was the son of F. Melius Christiansen, and was a fine musician, athlete, and a member of the St. Olaf Choir. In 1919 he enrolled in St. Olaf College, and in 1920, took a brief hiatus, leaving the college to teach at the Mayville Normal Teachers College in North Dakota, on the recommendation of his father. Here, Olaf was able to search his soul for his true calling. He started and directed a college band, was the dean of men, and was put in charge of athletics. Olaf, recalling the experience, stated “We

developed a fair band and church choir, but I lost all but one basketball game! That year provided the needed source of inspiration!”³⁰ This experience in North Dakota paved the way for Olaf to focus his intentions on music.

Following the year in North Dakota, Olaf Christiansen continued his studies at St. Olaf College, focusing his efforts on music. Even while focusing on the study of music, Olaf kept himself active. As a man of many talents, he competed in numerous sports, including gymnastics, swimming, golf, track, and tennis, where he was even captain of the gym team his junior and senior year. Along with sports, he conducted the choir at the Congregational Church in Northfield.

Olaf’s talent in music became even more apparent as a student in college. Not only was he one of the select few throughout the years to have the distinction of being in the choir for four years, but he was also given the opportunity to conduct the choir his senior year. “On this tour (tour of 1923) Olaf was called upon to direct the concert in Green Bay ... (Grace Riggle recalled) the excitement when ‘Christy’ failed to appear at Green Bay, and ‘Ole’ had to direct us.”³¹

³⁰ Shaw, 231.

³¹ Grace Riggle, “St. Olaf Choir Tour - 1922-1923,” *Viking 1924-1925* (St. Olaf Yearbook), 138, <https://contentdm.stolaf.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/vikingyb&CISOPTR=3719&R EC=12>.

Olaf Christiansen, following graduation, continued his study in voice in New York City with voice and opera teacher Paul Parks. This study with Parks proved to be one of the paving stones in Olaf's concept of choral music and tone, as Parks emphasized "The value of pure vowels for the clarity of words."³² This led to one of Olaf's main distinctions from his father, who sacrificed diction for the beauty of the vocal blend. Olaf, as discussed later in this study, emphasized pureness of vowels, providing for a more frontal, Italian sound to the choir's sound, compared to the darker, oropharyngeal sound of his father.

Olaf went on to teach public school and junior college in Michigan, teaching a plethora of musical subjects, along with choral, band and sports duties. He accepted an offer to teach at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in Ohio in 1929 at the age of 28, and spent the next twelve years at the institution, where he worked to build the program to a high level of artistry and success, founding the Oberlin A Cappella Choir and the Musical Union. The A Cappella Choir was the touring choir of the college, most likely started based on Olaf's experience with his father's touring choirs. The Musical Union, on the other hand, was a large choir that performed Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Handel's *Messiah* in alternation. Olaf also continued to refine his

³² Albert Rykken Johnson, "The Christiansen Choral Tradition: F. Melius Christiansen, Olaf C. Christiansen, and Paul J. Christiansen," (PhD diss., University of Iowa, July, 1973), 298.

vocal technique by studying voice in the summer, and having a load of 50 or more individual voice students in a semester.

In 1939, during a sabbatical, Olaf obtained a master's degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City in sacred music. There he met and studied with Marshall Bryant and Douglas Stanley, the former who would be his summer voice instructor for the next few years that followed, prior to Olaf's installment at St. Olaf College.

2.2.2. OLAF TAKES OVER ST. OLAF CHOIR

The year 1941 was a turning point in the history of St. Olaf Choir. Although he earned more monetarily at Oberlin, and with a lucrative opportunity in Ann Arbor, Olaf Christiansen met with St. Olaf's President Boe and eventually agreed to come, even at a lower salary, to St. Olaf as the eventual replacement of F. Melius Christiansen. "(Olaf's) main motivation in accepting the offer from St. Olaf was to step in where he was needed and do something worthwhile."³³

For the first two years, Olaf Christiansen would serve as the assistant director of the St. Olaf Choir, taking over full responsibilities upon the retirement of F. Melius in the spring of 1943. Usually, with the retirement of

³³ Shaw, 250.

such a commanding figure in the field of music, difficulty is found in the subsequent years that follow, for the conductor, the ensemble, and the school. However, with Olaf, this was not an issue. “In his first year as sole director, Prof. Christiansen has gained the confidence and respect of every member, inspiring each one to enthusiastic effort.”³⁴

Olaf, for two years, shared the duties of the choir with his father, with Olaf conducting the first set the first year and F. Melius conducting the final two sets, and the second year, Olaf conducting the first two sets, with F. Melius conducting the last set only. This provided for a gentle change of hands, and was a very savvy way of handling the transition in conductors. It provided the choir the opportunity to experience both conductors, slowly fade away F. Melius, and increase the work of Olaf, and when the time came, an effortless transition was completed. This allowed the ideals of trust and dedication to remain with the choir, without the scrutiny or drama of changing conductors rapidly. As stated by President Clemens Granskour at F. Melius’ memorial service in 1955, “He went out of the picture as active director of the Choir as magnificently as he had entered the scenes of his labours.”³⁵

However, the transition in conductors was not without a couple of bumps. Olaf’s style was quite different than that of his father’s, and it was

³⁴ Riggle, *Viking*, 1944, 102,
<https://contentdm.stolaf.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/vikingyb&CISOPTR=7827&REC=8>.

³⁵ Clemens M. Granskou, tribute to F. Melius, 1955.

difficult for the choir to understand the wants of the new conductor. The choir became accustomed to F. Melius' emotional side and sense of imagery within his art. Olaf, in contrast, was much more objective and distant. This was largely due to Olaf's expertise in vocal technique, which was lacking with his instrumentalist father. Olaf, a commanding figure, was relentless in cementing his style for the choir. He had a preconceived concept, and he had a mission to establish himself in the school and in the choral world. However, with his commanding figure, his expertise in vocal technique, and commitment to excellence, coupled with the choir's soft transition during the two years to the leadership of Olaf, Olaf was able to effectively continue the excellence of the St. Olaf Choir without any major interruptions. "Under the direction of Olaf, the St. Olaf Choir continued its reputation as a premier choir of the *a cappella* tradition, singing only unaccompanied works that were sacred in nature."³⁶ Olaf's successful 25-year career took off.

2.2.3. OLAF CHRISTIANSEN'S CHORAL CONCEPT

Brought up in a musical Lutheran household in Northfield, Minnesota, Olaf Christiansen had the luxury of growing up in the shadow of his father, the St. Olaf Choir, and music. This was imperative to Olaf's musical growth and

³⁶ Alan Zabriskie, "Evolution of Choral Sound of the St. Olaf Choir and the Westminster Choir" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2010), 17.

the continuation of the St. Olaf Choir under his command. Following the full transfer of the choir to Olaf, he retained many qualities established by his father: the choir continued to be a touring ensemble, the performance of a cappella works continued, emphasis was given to blend, and the choir was built on the solidity of the bass section. However, as stated earlier in the previous section of this study, Olaf Christiansen's approach to choral singing was vastly different than that of his father. Based on his studies with Paul Potts, Olaf acquired a vast knowledge of vocal technique, and grew a love for Italian vowels. This love emphasized the importance of clear text, along with the correct placement and pronunciation of vowels. Therefore, Olaf's choral concept was, due to the result of his study with Potts, a brighter, more forward placement of the voice. "(Olaf's) goal was to have the music be beautiful and perfected enough so that it didn't distract from the message of the text... We did work on text articulation, but mostly on vowel colors, and very little on consonants."³⁷ With F. Melius, the choir shaped vowels more in the shape of an /o/ or /u/ placement, but in regards to Olaf's style, he insisted on using the vowel /i/ to brighten the color, and give a sense of 'openness' to the choir.³⁸ Furthermore, the emphasis of music of the Renaissance required the tone to be

³⁷ Robert Scholz, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 19, 2014, transcript.

³⁸ See Appendix B for a list of IPA symbols.

a brighter tone in the mind of Olaf. “Olaf... in favoring selections from the Pre-Bach period, sought a more brilliant tone.”³⁹

Olaf’s concept of choral sound, built on the basses, was that if the low voices were well prepared, having good resonance, intonation, blend, and a uniformity of vowels, it provided a solid structure that would further enhance the balancing and intonation of the upper voices.⁴⁰ This provided for a firm chordal structure, with a firm root note, which is often prevalent in the bass line, and allowed for the rest of the choir to effectively build on the full, rich sound of the basses in the fundamental notes. The availability of having young men returning from their military service from WWII allowed Olaf to indulge in using a firm, mature male sound. This sound was enjoyed by most; however, Olaf needed to spend more time on balance issues, due to the fact that he had a more mature sounding men’s section in comparison to the younger women’s section. One reviewer in Chicago noted that the imbalance between male and female voices made the younger ladies sound thin.⁴¹

Although younger in age and maturity in voice, the women often also received great praise for their tone. However, some felt that the female sound was unnatural and mechanical, in comparison to the men. Alice Eversman of Washington, D.C., singled out the sopranos. “They are ‘firm, true and clear,’

³⁹ Shaw, 270.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 273.

⁴¹ *The Chicago Sun*, February 7, 1947.

she wrote, but ‘that cool, rather hollow tone’ made for a monotonous effect. Eversman remembered a warmer and more vital tone from the choirs led by F. Melius Christiansen compared to ‘the finely thought out and restrained singing’ she heard at the concert in Constitution Hall in 1948.”⁴²

Olaf Christiansen believed that vocal pedagogy was a concept that all of his students should understand. Therefore, he centered his teaching on vocal pedagogy. Unlike his father, Olaf incorporated approximately 10-15 minutes for warm-ups in rehearsals almost every day. However, he let the warm-up exercises speak for themselves, rather than speaking too much about technique. “(Olaf) would start out with warm-ups, and he didn’t have a whole lot to say...we had a lot of people who could make the sound he wanted to have without his fussing too much...so I have less a feeling of his being confining to the choir in terms of tone, because there were a lot of us who could just do it.”⁴³ Due to the high demand for being a member of the choir, most choir members and auditionees worked relentlessly on perfecting their vocal technique to conform to the ideals sought after by Olaf. The members of the choir would be the ones that could sing in the manner wanted effortlessly, without hurting themselves. “We had six or seven first sopranos that could

⁴² Alice Eversman, *Washington Evening Star*, February 10, 1948.

⁴³ Scholz, interview.

make the sound (Olaf wanted) without hurting their voices, without them having to tell him, from his viewpoint, how to do it.”⁴⁴

Many of the other aspects that Olaf worked on in rehearsals were “the development of breath, posture, vocal cords, flexibility of resonant space, and a sensitive ear. He established these emphases through a series of stretches and vocal exercises.”⁴⁵ Beginning the rehearsal by working on breath, Olaf effectively stretched the muscles of breathing. He also passively stretched the glottis and pharynxes, by emphasizing a relaxed opening of the vocal instrument in breathing. Olaf used a lot of kinesthetic exercises, such as stretching with hands, bending at the waist, and more. Possibly due to his athletic nature, he employed these facets onto his students.

As stated previously in this section, Olaf’s emphasis was on vowels, specifically Italianate vowel placement and production. Vowels had to be uniform in the choirs in Olaf Christiansen’s tenure. The vowel was not created in the mouth, as Olaf felt that the opening of the mouth was not necessary to create the vowel. Rather, the vowel was created in the pharynx, from the upper laryngeal pharynx to the oropharynx, and with minimal movement of the mouth and lips.⁴⁶ In order to keep the brightness that was

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Zabriskie, 26.

⁴⁶ Anton Armstrong, “Celebrating 75 Years of Musical Excellence: The Evolution of the St. Olaf Choir,” (DMA diss., Michigan State University, 1986).

preferred by Olaf, incorporation of the /i/ vowel was imperative to open the nasal cavity and incorporate the use of the nasopharynx, allowing for a ping in the tone. The vowels were quick and did not morph into each other. (See Figures 2 and 3)

Although Olaf Christiansen did not adhere much to the concept of vowel modification, he did allow for a change in the vowel structure to give a different timbre on the vowel, based on what was called for in the music and text. In essence, he was allowing for different 'shades' of vowel sound to enhance the text of the music being sung. By raising the soft-palate, the oropharynx and buccopharynx were given more space to allow resonance of the vowel. This also allowed for the nasopharynx to open wider, providing more resonance in the nasal cavity, thus, a brighter, more brilliant sound. By requiring a lower soft palate, a fuller, almost covered effect was apparent in the sound. The vowel needed to be created further in the back, and the lack of space created a smaller resonating chamber, thus a darker sound.

Overall, Olaf Christiansen brought the choir firmly into the 20th century from a technical standpoint. Unlike his father, who was an instrumentalist, Olaf had ample study in vocal technique, and he incorporated this knowledge into his choirs. He emphasized a bright sound with ping, which was vastly different from his predecessor. His selection of repertoire stressed the importance of the text rather than his music. He always strove for pureness of vowels throughout the range, but would incorporate coloring of

the vowel by shaping the buccal pharynx by raising and lowering the soft palate.

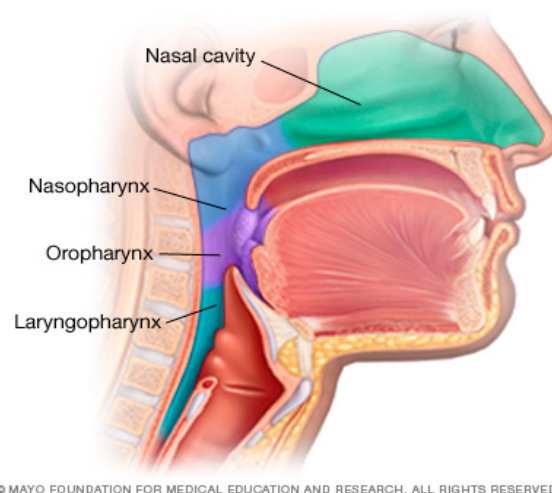


Figure 2.⁴⁷ Location of the various pharynges in the human body. Olaf Christiansen asked that the vowels be formed in the oropharynx and upper laryngopharynx. The mouth was not a major force in the creation of vowels.

⁴⁷ "Parts of the throat (pharynx)," Mayo Clinic, accessed October 31, 2014, <http://www.mayoclinic.org/parts-of-the-throat-pharynx/img-20005644>.

BASIC VOWELS – DIPHTHONGS

MOST USED VOWEL SOUNDS

e	see, meet, feed, keep.	ŭh	come, sun, but, done.
i	lip, lilt, cliff, hymn.	aw	song, fall, dawn, talk.
ā	aid, cave, glade, fate.	ô	door, floor, tore, war.
è	end, then, said, dead.	ō	bold, foe, grow, sew.
ā	fad, man, brand, dance.	ōō	look, book, took, foot.
äh	far, calm, pod, knob.	ōō	drew, blue, fool, shoot.

ODD COMBINATION VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

û	bird, turn, verb, serve = uh with German ö (form lips for “o”; tongue for “a” to avoid midwestern “rr.”)	ī or ä-y:	buy, tie, light, sky.
ū or yu:	pure, cue, pew, fume.		

Figure 3. Olaf Christiansen’s vowel concept chart.⁴⁸

Olaf had an ideal sound that he wanted in his choir. However, it is the author’s opinion that he never reached the pinnacle for which he strove. “There is no such thing as a *straight tone* among well-trained singers. I wouldn’t have a STRAIGHT voice in my *a cappella* choir, but I [Olaf Christiansen] demand trained voices, super-trained singers (emphasis in original).”⁴⁹ Regardless of Olaf’s belief that his singers should not employ the use of a straight tone, the choir, like F. Melius’ was almost exclusively referred to as a “straight-tone” choir. Common misconceptions of the choir

⁴⁸ Olaf Christiansen, *Voice Builder*. Park Ridge, Illinois: Neil A. Kjos Music, 1959, 4.

⁴⁹ F. Melius Christiansen, “Solo and Ensemble Singing,” *National Association of Teachers of Singing Bulletin* 21, no. 3 (1965): 17.

members, along with the pureness of vowels, heavily attributed to the perception of a straight-tone sound. Due to choir members often subjugating their voices to fit the ideal sound of the conductor, some were able to sing in a healthy, free manner, but a majority of the singers compressed their sound, not allowing for natural vibration of the larynx, thus creating a straight sound. Putting these two concepts together, a straight-tone sound ensued. It is the author's opinion that Olaf Christiansen's ideal choral sound was that of a light, bright vibrato, consistent with his training with Paul Potts, Marshall Bryant and Douglas Stanley. However, with young, impressionable singers vying for a spot in the prestigious St. Olaf Choir, the tendency to conform the voice to meet the ideal sound of the conductor was rampant. This perceived sound, a straight-tone mentality originating with F. Melius Christiansen, was never eliminated during Olaf's tenure. Due to this, the choral members suppressed their voices, losing the individuality of their own tone, to fit their perception of the ideal choral sound. Thus, the ideal sound of Olaf's was never realized.

2.3. PAUL J. CHRISTIANSEN

2.3.1. *BEGINNING OF PAUL J. CHRISTIANSEN'S CAREER*

Similar to his older brother Olaf, Paul J. Christiansen, son of F. Melius Christiansen, was immersed in music and sports at a young age. He began formal piano lessons at eight years old, studying with professors at St. Olaf College. In middle school he began studying composition and counterpoint from his father, and continued his focus on piano, so much so that even his parents were worried that he was practicing too much. He took piano much more seriously than his brothers, and enrolled a year early to St. Olaf College.

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F. Melius Christiansen saw a musical passion and talent in music in Paul J. that he felt was more pronounced than any of his other sons. His perception of Paul J.'s talent was so much so that he was more attentive and guiding to Paul J. and his musical education and endeavors.⁵¹ His interest lay in orchestral music, but still, he sang in the St. Olaf Choir his senior year, studied piano copiously, and focused his attention also to composition. His singing in the choir for only one year was a much needed building block in the

⁵⁰ Johnson, 414-417.

⁵¹ Kenneth Jennings, interview by Christina Marie Armendarez, December 2003.

career path of Paul J. Not having this experience, it is not known if Paul J. would have made his mark at Concordia with the Concordia Choir.

Studying composition with his father, Paul J. developed his compositional abilities to the point that they were acceptable to be performed by the St. Olaf Choir, further gaining him confidence in his compositional abilities. In 1933, his composition, “Beyond the Haze,” was performed by the choir, and published by Kjos in 1934.⁵²

Upon graduation from St. Olaf College, Paul J. continued with graduate studies at Oberlin College, partially due to his brother Olaf being the choral director, studying under Normand Lockwood. It was Lockwood who steered Paul J.’s career to composition, rather than piano, encouraging him to take more risks and incorporate more modern techniques in his music, in addition to the romantic inspired techniques learned from F. Melius. “(Lockwood) was a very good teacher for me – very nice about just suggesting that there might be other ways of doing things.”⁵³

Soon, Paul J. left for Eastman School of Music, the mecca at the time for American composition, where he earned a Masters degree in Composition, studying with Bernard Rogers. He composed non-stop, and one of his

⁵² Johnson, 418.

⁵³ Paul J. Christiansen, Interview by Albert Johnson, March 6, 1973.

compositions was performed by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra
“Phantasie in the Form of Variations” in 1939.

Another influence to Paul J. and his compositional abilities was the conductor of the now Minnesota Symphony, Dmitri Mitropoulos, a friend of F. Melius Christiansen, who would serve as a mentor in conducting and composition to Paul J. Upon commissioning a work by Paul J., “Vials of Wrath,” Mitropoulos “was not satisfied (with the music) and encouraged Paul to be more daring...Paul consider(ed) Mitropoulos to be his strongest influence in the art of conducting.”⁵⁴

2.3.2. PAUL J. CHRISTIANSEN GOES TO CONCORDIA COLLEGE

Concordia had been scouting Paul J. Christiansen for some time. Before he even completed his Masters degree, Paul J. accepted a position at the college as the head of the Department of Music in 1937. In the position he conducted the college choir, taught music classes, conducting and composition up to his retirement almost fifty years later.

⁵⁴ Christina Marie Armenderez, *The Influence of Fredrik Melius Christiansen on Six Minnesota Conductor-Composers.* (MM thesis, University of Northern Texas, 2006), 68.

At the beginning of his Concordia career, Paul J.'s compositional skills were already beaming. His father, F. Melius, would regularly incorporate his son's compositions into the St. Olaf Choir's concert programs. Songs performed at St. Olaf in the first five years of Paul J.'s tenure at Concordia included "Autumn Woods," "Unto the Lord," "Magnificat," "As a Flower," "Sing to God," and "The Lord Reigneth"⁵⁵ That these compositions were performed by the premiere choir in the United States was a testament to the talents and musical skills of Paul J., and foreshadowed Concordia Choir's upcoming success and arrival to the top of the choral world.

Concordia quickly became a powerhouse choral institution, strongly resembling the program built by F. Melius and Olaf at St. Olaf. Paul J. established Concordia's signature Christmas Program and toured extensively with the choir.⁵⁶

Eighteen thousand people marking the advent of the King of Kings.... A glorious celebration of that time setting event in Bethlehem... For 25 years the talent of Concordia College has been harnessed to recreate the joy of Christmas, presenting each season an original and varied music event.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Johnson, 422-423.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 425.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Paul J. Christiansen was much more like his father than any of his brothers. He mirrored his father in that he had a very strong personality with a strong sense of discipline that demanded perfection from his choir. He composed and arranged a plethora of works for choir (and orchestra), and with F. Melius and Olaf, led the Christiansen Choral School teaching sessions. Paul J.'s style also held similarities to his father's, much more so than Olaf's.

2.3.3. PAUL J. CHRISTIANSEN'S CHORAL CONCEPT

Like his brother Olaf, Paul J. Christiansen was very active, not only at Concordia, but also with the Paul J. Christiansen Choral School. This school taught the Christiansen choral principles, and was a fast-paced summer session of choral music study. In 1971, Albert Johnson, a former student of Paul J.'s, attended his summer choral school. In his Ph.D dissertation, he included Paul J.'s opening speech, which adheres strongly to Paul J.'s feelings and attitudes toward music, and effectively sums up his theory on choral music education:

You have heard the saying, "experience is the best teacher." But I don't mean... you have to have done

it a long time. I mean it rather – you enlarge your concept of life and of music.

It isn't the technique. The technique only helps us to provide those experiences. But the end is the purifying experience of realizing a piece of music in its beauty without a lot of junk tied unto it. When everything is working together we have these moments, rare joys.

It's these experiences that we hope to hand on to our singers. It takes technique to do it, but it's the experience of Bach – as a man, as a thinker, as a man who feels about life – to pass on some of these big people's thoughts and feelings about life, and to give them to your singers so they will profit by what men before have done, what men who are doing something now are thinking.

I think it's the experiences of life that are the greatest part of life. It isn't the superficial things that make us happy. It's the things that move us inside that make us happy.

So I hope that we can have some of that here – an occasional chord in tune, a moment here and there maybe

– that will help be an inspiration for your work next year. We had a moment – one moment at least, last week. I can remember I was tired at rehearsal and we were singing a song. I don't remember how it happened but an atmosphere started to develop – and I began to feel funny – and everybody else began to feel funny – I could feel that they were feeling funny – because I was feeling funny, [gentle laughter] I don't know, I can't explain it. But when that piece was done – I still had a group to go through that night. It was before rehearsal was over – but I just had to leave it. It was one of those times, there just happened to be something there, and I don't know what made it. It's those times that sometimes we don't calculate that are the greatest. I can remember incidents like that throughout my life – orchestra or soloist – that kept the love of music alive in me to strive for something similar or better.

So if you give some of these moments [quality experiences] to your students, it may be the spark that will start a composer composing or a conductor conducting, and so on, which is part of our job – to hand

on to the next people the best things that we have. Kids say that we gave them a pile of junk. But I don't think it's entirely all true. I think we have given something good, and it's up to us to try to do that.

We can't make perfection here this week, but I was quite pleased with the results here last week. I wonder if you will be as good. It was, I think, the longest final evening, with more music than we've had before. Still, it was quite a satisfactory thing. I see there are a lot of talented people among us here. I think you should be able to do pretty well. Now I want to get started as quickly as possible so we can do more music and do it better.

So this evening is the evening we start to organize the choir, so that you don't have to take so much time tomorrow. We will go over to the rehearsal room, and you will all have to sing a solo -- I'll name an opera for instance [general laughter] But it is of interest to you to hear different voices any way.

It [voice selection] always has been interesting to me, and baffled me, even my own choices. Every year,

about in November, I think “How in the world did she get in here?” It was my choice. So it’s easy to make mistakes. And you can’t get too smart about that, because there goes your rehearsal time. Every time you get a wrong person in there it’s time out the window. The most important phase of directing is choosing the singers, so you don’t have to kick yourself all the rest of the year. So we’re going to do this tonight.

We’re here to study these things, to look at them, to put them on the table and be objective about it – what sounds are good, what sounds are not good – what kind of diction to use, what is bad diction.

So these things we look at absolutely objectively here. You’re not being examined as a great singer, you’re studying sounds of voices – what makes good sound – in order to help your singers back home better.

I hope there will be some of those experiences for you this week, too. Never hesitate to ask questions or to talk to the staff, inside or outside the clan. You have this time. Get the most out of it you can get.

Have a nice week.⁵⁸

Paul J. Christiansen, like that of his father and Olaf, stressed the importance of the selection of the singers in the choir. Not only was the audition to choose the singers for the choir, but it was also an avenue to evaluate the aspects of musicality that Paul J. could take to teach his students to become better musicians. In order to have a good choir, the conductor must be able and willing to help them to succeed.⁵⁹

Paul J.'s musical ear was sensitive to tone above all else. He emphasized that even if the pitch is matched with the other singers, if the color of the tone didn't match, then the chord could not be in tune. "What color is it – brown?"⁶⁰ Each tone type had a specific color assigned to it, and Paul J. was searching for his specific combination of colors to bring out the best of his choir. In assigning the color to his singers, Paul J. would analyze voice size, intonation, tone, vowel placement, and the varying shades of bright and dark sound that was produced by each choir member.⁶¹

Paul J. was adamant that he thoroughly knew every voice in his choir. He would go to long lengths to make sure he knew the tone color of each

⁵⁸ Albert Rykken Johnson, *The Christiansen Choral Tradition: F. Melius Christiansen, Olaf C. Christiansen, and Paul J. Christiansen*, (PhD dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1973), 429-431.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 432.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 433

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 433.

singer, analyzing it in order to correctly place his singers in the choir. He would compare the tone color of each singer to that of an oboe (reedy) or a french horn (warm), the former emphasizing a brighter, more forward placement of sound and the latter a full, round, suppleness to the sound.⁶²

In the audition, Paul J. would have the singers sing a melodic passage which would allow him to analyze a variety of aspects: tone, timbre, ease of passaggio, range, vocal technique, and color. For sopranos, the placement of the vocalise was in the second passaggio range. This was to listen to the ease of the sopranos in producing the notes that approached the passaggio note around F#5. As taught by his father, Paul J. listened to the pureness and ease with which sopranos produced their notes, particularly around E5. The ability to sing with a pure, easy, free sound without going sharp was indicative of a soprano. Those with heavier sounds were classified as second sopranos or altos. Altos were given a vocalise that had them sing in the lower third of their range, beginning on F4, descending in a lyric fashion to an A3 (F4, D4, E4, C4, D4, B3, A3).⁶³ Paul J. was listening specifically for ease of transitioning to the lower register, and also for a brightness to the full-bodied alto sound to offset the first sopranos singing in the upper range of their voices. The ideal alto would have a cut to her voice that would allow for ample sound with the

⁶² Ibid., 434.

⁶³ See Appendix E for note names, as referenced on a keyboard.

demands of a high-tessitura soprano. This bright color was mixed in with darker colors, in order to create a balance.⁶⁴ The tenors were auditioned in a similar fashion to the sopranos. The tenors sang a melodic vocalise through their upper passaggio. Paul J. preferred a bright sounding tenor resembling a reedy sound. Tenors must be able to sing above the second passaggio in full head voice, with ease, particularly the A4 and Bb4 notes.⁶⁵ The auditionees that could sing an Eb4 with relative ease and pureness/thinness, without modification of the vowel were considered tenors. Basses were treated similarly to the altos. Low basses were required to have a solid D2. The focus note was F3 for the basses. If it was a heavier tone, it was indicative of a Bass two. A lighter, more lyric quality indicated a baritone.

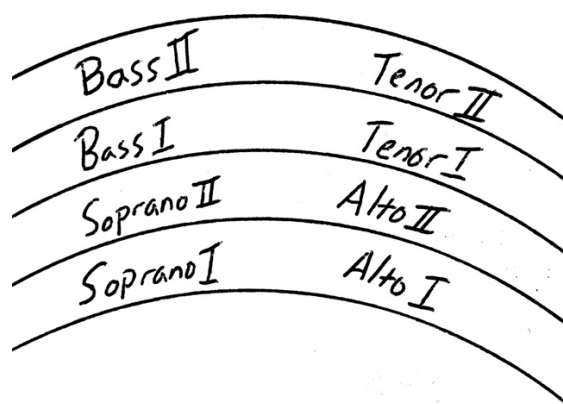


Figure 4. Standard block formation of Paul J. Christiansen.

⁶⁴ Johnson, 440.

⁶⁵ Bergmann, 148.

Paul J. was meticulous in his placement of the choir. He placed them in a standard block formation. (See Figure 4) Like his father, he preferred to have a concept of a semi-chorus within the full choir. The smallest, lightest sounds were located in the middle of the choir, allowing for better intonation in the center of the choir, more attention to rhythmic accuracy, and to allow the semi-chorus to perform particularly difficult passages and/or to provide contrast to the demands of the music. Next to the center semi-chorus, he placed larger with a combination of bright and dark colors and soloist-type voices, with the heavier, larger voices, often with darker colored tone on the ends. The remainder of the singers who could not blend (be “absorbed” in Paul J.’s terms) at the beginning, would be placed at the ends of the sections. “In this way the center of the choir is strong in intonation and clarity, the center of each section strong in volume and intensity.”⁶⁶

In regards to vowel placement, Paul J. was consistently trying to match specific colors of tone in the choir. “In this concept of vowel tuning, an attempt is made to unify the vowel in the same way as one seeks to unify the pitch.”⁶⁷ The bright vowels (/i/, /e/, /I/) needed a full, supported sound to them to complement the inherent brightness. Likewise, the round, back vowels (/u/, /o/, /ɔ/, /a/, /ʌ/) must also retain bright characteristics. The resonance

⁶⁶ Johnson, 444-447.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 448.

resulting from this, coupled with opening and relaxing of the vocal apparatus and pharynxes was a tone that was warm, yet brilliant.⁶⁸ The focus of Paul J., like his father, was on the vowel, not the consonant. Therefore, the consonants took a secondary role, and were not particularly emphasized.

In regards to balance, Paul J. had a similar approach to his father, albeit, his concept of tone was more brilliant than his father's insistence on a covered tone. The sopranos must be thin and bright at the top. They must be able to negotiate the passaggio freely. The altos must provide a full, yet correlating brightness in the sound (combined with the fullness) to offset the sopranos in their upper registers. The tenors were of a reedy quality, consistent with Olaf and F. Melius. The basses must be full sounding, and sing with confidence and poise. This allowed for the upper parts to flourish and reverberate. However, rather than sitting on the notes, Paul J. emphasized that the basses must move the choir. "I want the basses to activate the whole choir. You get things off the ground."⁶⁹

In many ways, it could be said that Paul J. had the most musical talent out of all of the Christiansen's. He knew what he was looking for in sound, and was strict leading the choir to adhere to the sound that he was after. Paul J. insisted on tonal colors, and consistently spoke on tuning the color and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 450.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 499.

shaping the vowel. The color of the tone had just as much to do with blend as the precision of pitch. A bright tone was consistent in all of the parts, and placement of the singers was similar to his father. Paul J. was a true scholar and educator, and sought to enlighten his students and singers musically every day. He was fixated on the choral sound that he wanted, and out of the three Christiansens, Paul J. was the only one that truly got close to the ideal sound he was after.

2.4 WESTON NOBLE

2.4.1. *WESTON NOBLE'S MUSIC INFLUENCES*

One of the most prolific and influential conductors in the history of the Lutheran Choral Tradition is without a doubt Weston Noble. Born on a farm in Riceville, Iowa in 1922, Noble was the second born of seven children. Living on a farm, Noble learned the value of hard work and determination early on. “A strong work ethic was pervasive in the Noble home.”⁷⁰ This led to his success as one of the top music educators. He practiced an hour of piano every morning between milking cows and leaving for school, and through the guidance of his parents, he dedicated himself to academics, and graduated at only sixteen years old as valedictorian of his class and winner of the Reader’s Digest Award for Scholastic Achievement.

Weston Noble began his formal music studies at five years old, purely by accident. One of Noble’s earliest memories is of his mother attempting to put him down for a nap. Being rather feisty one day, he refused his nap and she asked if he would like to take piano lessons. “He was thrilled at the

⁷⁰ Perry White, “The Whole Conductor – Weston Noble’s Philosophies on the Psychology of Conducting and Musicianship.” (DMA diss., University of Oklahoma, 1998), 11.

prospect of such a musical endeavor and agreed to lay down. However, he confesses that he was too excited to really sleep. He did begin his piano studies and continued them throughout his high school years.”⁷¹ Along with piano, Noble extensively studied music, singing soprano, tenor, and bass in his four years of choir in public school, along with playing the clarinet in the band.

Along with Noble’s piano studies were three significant musical experiences in his formative years. First, he made it a point to get home quickly after school and rush through his chores so he could get to the radio and listen to “Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians”, a chorus program on the Chesterfield Radio Hour. The second experience was a half-hour radio show on Sunday evenings. Noble often recalls how he would conduct the music in front of a mirror while listening to this program, and how it was one of the deciding factors on his choice of a career in music. The third experience was the encouragement of Noble’s aunt and uncle, who understood the value of music, and saw strong promise in him. “When he was a junior in high school, his aunt and uncle took him to Spillville to hear the Luther College Band, and afterward drove him to Decorah to see the campus. This was a crucial step in Noble’s musical development.”⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

⁷² Ibid., 12.

Noble originally planned on attending the University of Iowa, but a visit from an admissions counselor from Luther College, Erling (Bing) Wold, with him and his family at their home changed his mind. That visit formed Noble's academic future, as his father stated "Well, I guess you will be going to Luther."⁷³ Soon after, at the age of sixteen (three months shy of seventeen), Noble was a student at Luther College, majoring in music education and history, while studying organ with Donald J. Larson, and playing organ at the local Methodist Church his final two years of college.

Noble was also a member of Theodore Hoelty-Nickel's newly found chorus, Schola Cantorum. Upon an absence by the conductor for rehearsal one day, Noble was asked if he could take over rehearsal for the day. It was this experience that drove Noble to decide to become a conductor.

He was given the position of assistant conductor his senior year, under the tutelage of a new conductor, Sigvart Hofland. It was well known that Hofland had a distaste for the conducting portion of his job, which led to a plethora of podium time for Noble, including preparing most of the *Messiah* rehearsals. Noble often recalls this opportunity, along with his experience in the band with Sperati as some of the most influential of his college career.⁷⁴

⁷³ Weston Noble, conversations with the author.

⁷⁴ White, 14.

Following an early graduation from college, Noble was called to military duty, fighting in World War II for three years as a tank driver. This experience, although atrocious, only helped to strengthen his character, persona, and faith.⁷⁵

At the end of, and following the war, Hofland was helping Noble with his future. Noble stated in a letter to Orpha Noble, “Dr. Hofland of Luther College has my entire future planned out when I get home. It is tremendous in scope, and I am going to write him and tell him that he has just too big ideas for me. It would be wonderful, however, if they would work out.”⁷⁶

2.4.2 BEGINNING OF WESTON NOBLE’S CAREER

Upon returning from war, Weston Noble worked almost immediately heavily in music, giving approximately eighty-five piano lessons a week between his home and at Luther College, teaching summer music classes at Luther College, playing organ at First Lutheran Church in Decorah, conducting the Farm Bureau Women’s Chorus, and playing organ on Luther College’s radio station, KWLC.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ A complete tribute to Weston Noble’s military career can be seen in the documentary “World War II with Weston Noble” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OiQvDaDJ4E>.

⁷⁶ Weston Noble to Orpha Noble, June 3, 1945.

⁷⁷ White, 22.

Rather than attend the Juilliard School, Noble, at the last moment, decided to stay in Iowa, and taught high school music in Luverne, Iowa for the next two years, while studying at the University of Michigan in the summers for his master's degree. Following major success at Luverne High School, Noble resigned to continue his graduate work at the University of Michigan. However, he was offered a temporary teaching position at Luther College as the director of the band and the newly founded Nordic Cathedral Choir, as the previous conductor, Sigvart Steen, resigned without notice. After much consideration, and advice from his piano teacher, he decided to take the one year assignment. Noble was so successful that this one year replacement turned into a 57 year tenure as music professor at Luther College.

2.4.3. A LUTHER COLLEGE LEGACY

Weston Noble's first year at Luther College consisted of conducting the Concert Band and the Nordic Cathedral Choir, teaching music theory, and music appreciation. As a man of sincerity and conviction, with endless optimism and conviction to music, Noble quickly won the respect of his students.

Noble continued studying during his first years at Luther, attending summer graduate programs at Michigan. He completed his master

of music degree in 1952, and worked on a doctorate through 1955.

Unfortunately, a fire in the Preus Gymnasium destroyed Noble's office and his collection of lectures, papers and files for his dissertation. He never did finish his DMA.

Weston Noble established many long lasting legacies at Luther College. Exceptional in marketing, promotion, and public relations, Noble was heavily responsible for the recruiting of students to the music program. He put a personal touch to every student that he recruited to the college. During choir tours, he would be seen daily sitting and writing personalized letters and cards to all prospective students on Luther's, and his radar. He would make phone calls to all prospective music, and in later years, even sent gifts. The author of this paper was the recipient of all of these, including a long-sleeve navy blue t-shirt with a photo outline of Weston Noble's face pointing out stating "Weston Wants You". This personalized attention to prospective students further enhanced the personal connection music students have toward their alma mater, and even now gives a sense of pride toward Luther College that is rarely rivaled in other schools.

Another legacy was the development of the Luther College music department, and specifically, the rise of the Luther College Nordic Choir⁷⁸ to

⁷⁸ The Luther College Nordic Cathedral Choir changed its name to "Luther College Nordic Choir" early in Noble's career.

national and international prominence, under the guidance of Noble. The choir developed into one of the top touring choirs in the United States, and also toured extensively internationally. Under Noble, the touring choir and band were established, and the music department grew into one of the largest in the United States. The Dorian Festival, one of the United States largest music festivals, and the summer music camps were established, inviting talented high school singers from around the US to perform and study at Luther College, now bringing 3,500+ prospective music students to the college every year.

Noble was known as an innovator for the concept of spirituality in the choir's music. "The Nordic Choir under Weston Noble has been known for its sensitive performances of sacred choral music, and particularly for performances of Romantic works ... Noble's interpretations occasionally are marked by a distinctively personal and at times a more than usually emotional approach to standard repertoire. The distinctive sound of the choir is a product of Noble's quest for lyricism which stems primarily from his soprano and tenor sections."⁷⁹

On a personal note, the author of this study can further attest to the conviction and dedication of Weston Noble. As a young student in the middle of his freshman year, Noble took it upon himself to invite the author to his

⁷⁹ Benson.

table at lunch, as 3:00 pm was the time that both usually ate. The experience of that day continued through the rest of the academic year, and the author made it a point to have 3:00 available for lunch throughout the rest of his time at Luther College. During these lunches together, the conversations ranged anywhere from the usual topic of music, to emotion, relationships, history, to much more. The most profound conversations had to do with Weston Noble's now well-known philosophy and concept toward music, the connection of the body, soul and spirit.

2.4.4. WESTON NOBLE'S CHORAL CONCEPT

Weston Noble's choral concept is structured around his understanding of *vulnerability*. He points out that "each one of us desires to express our inner thoughts, our inner emotions, in other words, to be vulnerable. Yet this is not an easy step to take. To say 'this is me, this is who I am' takes far more courage than most of us possess."⁸⁰ Conductors, in order to effectively conduct their choirs, must be vulnerable. They must be willing to allow their emotions, feelings, and thoughts to be put on the table in order to be a conduit for the meaning of the music and text that the composer is trying to relay. If

⁸⁰ Weston Noble, *Creating the Special World* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2005), 21.

conductors cannot be in touch with their inner-self, allowing them to be vulnerable, the true emotion of music cannot be realized.

Weston Noble would often talk about this topic, and would relate his concept and attitudes toward music based on Bible verses: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.”⁸¹ He would refer to humans being tri-partite in nature. (See Figure 5) “I pray God your whole **spirit, soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸² Noble’s concept of body-soul-spirit is the centerpiece of his musicality. The spirit is number one. The soul is number two. The body is number three. However, in most people’s daily lives, the opposite holds true. If one can realign the importance of their tri-partite nature, optimism and true beauty will result. Noble states, “(The spirit) functions to inspire the soul. Its role is to animate the mind, the will, and our emotions – those times when life has its greatest meaning. The soul, in turn, functions to rule the body.”⁸³

Impressions come through the senses. Our senses link us to the earth and thereby create and maintain contact with the world around us. This is our **outer self**, the source of surface self-love, what we sense about ourselves. Our soul is our psychological

⁸¹ Hebrews 4:12.

⁸² 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

⁸³ Noble, 16.

part that is also tri-partite in nature: the mind, will, and emotions. These three comprise the ego, the center of our personality; the **inner self**...Our spirit is that part of us that allows us to reach outside ourselves, beyond our soul and body. In Genesis we read that God breathed spirit into matter and ‘humankind became a living soul.’ The three parts are matter, soul, spirit – or body, psychological dimension, and spiritual dimension. Our Spirit was made in God’s image so we can respond to Him – our Spirit is His link for guidance and instruction.⁸⁴

In other words, only when the physical body is healthily tended to, can one feed the soul, allowing for our inner self to be fed, which in turns feeds our spirit, allowing us to connect with God. When our spirit is fed, we feel the sensations, rare as they are, and usually, they are moments that are imprinted on a person for the remainder of their life. Noble’s first encounter with the spirit was in high school. “We began to sight read (Light Calvary Overture). As I was struggling with the sixteenth notes, the cornets entered with a fanfare-like theme. What hit me? My backbone rippled with excitement; I felt totally alive for a brief moment. It was so special, so much so I still recall every detail with great pleasure... We entered a special world.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

This sense of the special world is Weston Noble's theory on life, and the joys and splendors of it. He sincerely believes that it is majorly responsible for his longevity (at the time of writing this paper, he is a strong 92 years old). It is the only way to become truly whole in the human world, and enjoy all the thrills that life has to offer. This theory he has developed is directly responsible for his approach to choral music, and is directly responsible for his tone, timbre, and unusually higher attention to the emotion of music.

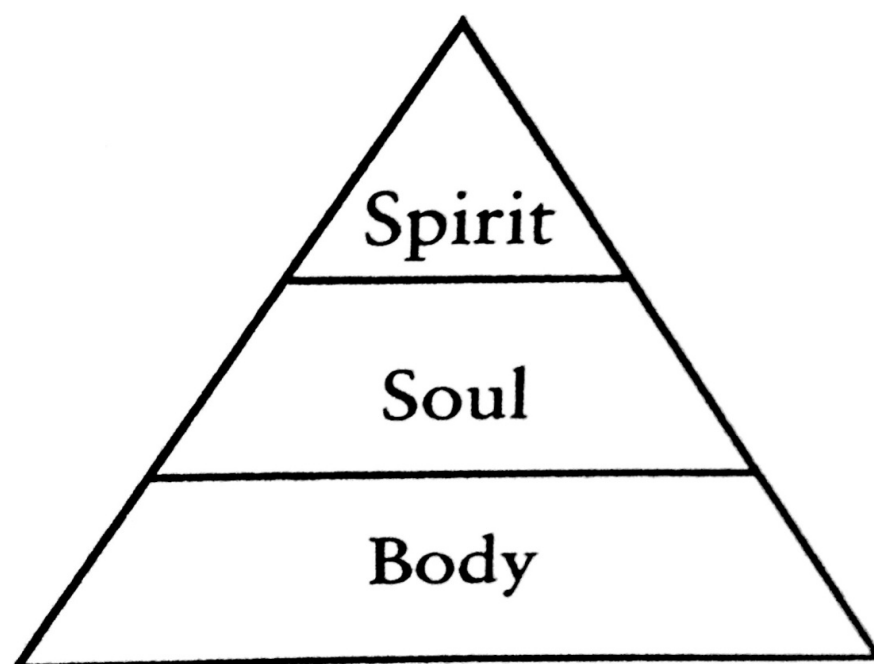


Figure 5. Weston Noble's tri-partite pyramid.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ibid., 16.e

Weston Noble always emphasized the meaning of the text of the music, and how the message of the text, coupled with the music, transported the listener and musicians to what he describes as the “special world.” In order to bring out the meaning of the text, emphasis was given to rhythm. Noble was heavily influenced by Robert Shaw. He took Shaw’s concept of count singing, expanded it, and developed his own method of day-tay-day singing. The function of the ‘tay’ was to act as a springboard, giving energy to the subsequent note. The ‘day’ could either be strong, or weak, or arsic and thetic. Arsic (to lift/be light) or thetic (fall/strong) in nature would be the major defining characteristic of Noble’s choral concept. The function of arsic notes was to lead to the thetic notes. Noble abided by four rules:

1. Weak to Strong

Any weak beat must lead to a strong beat. Beat two and four are naturally arsic, and thus will lead to beat three and the downbeat. Beat four naturally leads across the bar, (cross-bar phrasing)

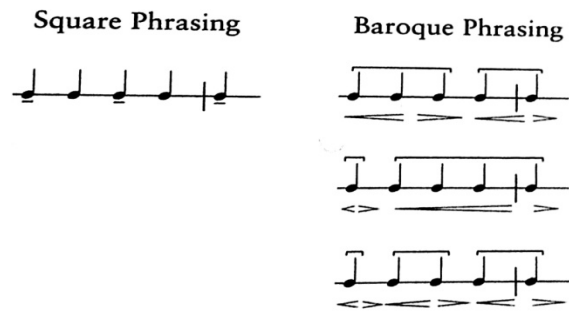


Figure 6. Example of weak to strong phrasing.

2. Short to Long

Shorter length notes lead to longer length notes. In other words, the shorter length notes are arsic and the longer length notes can be thought of as thetic, which was often referred to as “springboard” by Noble.

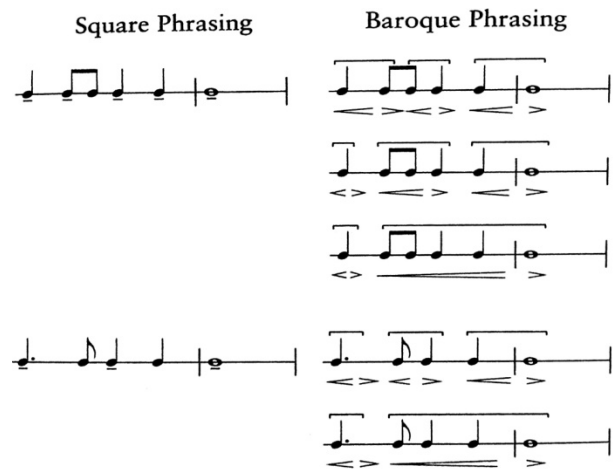


Figure 7. Example of short to long phrasing.

3. Repeated Notes

Repeated notes usually should be separated as a general subdivision. This relates to the ‘weak to strong’ rule in that the second repeated note will have a sense of being arsis, leaning to the next longer note in the phrase.



Figure 8. Example of repeated note phrasing.

4. Change of Song

When the melodic line changes in direction (ascending to descending/descending to ascending), the notes that follow the change should be treated as arsic, with the note prior to the change in direction being treated as thetic.



Figure 9. Example of change of song phrasing.⁸⁷

Noble emphasized energy not only in the arsic notes (springboards) leading to the thetic notes, but also in the rests preceding the onset of a note. The rest must be strong, or thetic in nature to allow for the energy to be transferred into the pickup notes that follow, which would usually be arsic in nature. Therefore, the rest also acts as a springboard. What this does is emphasize the energy in the music, further amplifying the composer's meaning of the text, and allowing the text to dance off the page. Noble's most common saying in any rehearsal was that "all music must dance." The way

⁸⁷ Ibid., 82-84.

the music danced was, in his view, based off of the awareness of the role of arsic and thetic music.

The use of imagery was important in Noble's rehearsals. Although well-versed in vocal technique, Noble emphasized imagery as a way to sing with the soul and spirit. His view was that if his singers could personalize the music, the meaning of the text, and how the text accentuates the music, his ideal of sensitivity would be realized. He would often use his own imagery in rehearsals. He often referred to the altos, stating that they "must sing the phrase like a greased pig going down the chute," meaning that they must sing with a sense of ease, with the notes being arsic, leading toward the thetic note. He would also mention often that a note needed more "tobacco sauce", meaning it needed more energy or direction, rather than sitting stagnant. His use of imagery and stories, and connecting them to the singers was an effective way to lead the choir to personalize the music.

Weston Noble always insisted, as Olaf Christiansen did, that the consonant be ahead of the beat, allowing the vowel to begin the beat. The consonant must always be executed quickly, lightly, and cleanly (Italianate), and the consonant must be pitched correctly with the following vowel. If the consonant preceding was an unvoiced consonant, the pitch should still be internally realized. He would also emphasize that if a word ends in a

consonant, with the following word beginning in a vowel, the ending consonant should elide with the second word.

In his book, Noble affirms Shaw's concept of rhythm and blend. "The bottom line of blend is **rhythm!** (Emphasis by the author)"⁸⁸ Noble, through his long-time association with Robert Shaw, emphasized that if the choir cannot arrive at a vowel at precisely the same time, blend was impossible. "Consonants establish rhythm – vowels establish beauty of tone. Thus, both the length and the quality of the vowel are of utmost importance."⁸⁹ Noble would emphasize that if the first vowel was executed properly, the subsequent vowels usually fell in line. The vowels were built in the same manner as a vocal pedagogue. Emphasis was given to the natural, supported vowel, and Noble encouraged modification of the vowel as the singers reached the *passaggio*. His vowels were often mixed with an /u/ or /ɔ/ as the *passaggio* was being approached for color, but he also emphasized the modulating to the open counterpart of closed vowels for vowel uniformity. The bottom line, however, was that the vowel was a result of proper consonant execution.

Voice placement within the section was a strong suit for Noble. He would find two singers that blended naturally, not necessarily two similar voices, but also opposites, and used them as the model pair in the section.

⁸⁸ Noble, 57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 57.

Sometimes the best matched pair were actually quite opposite vocally from each other. He would then add individuals to the left, right, and middle, repeating with all singers, until his ideal was established. Noble felt that the ultimate blend could be realized with proper placement.

Seating arrangement of sections was also important to Noble to attain his ideal sound. He utilized two main formations: the eight-part choir arrangement and the mixed formation (see figure 9). In the eight-part arrangement, altos were placed in front, with alto ones on the left, and alto twos on the right. Noble loved his altos, and felt that rarely would he get enough of the alto sound, thus, they were placed in the front to have proper balance. The altos also served as a “scrim” for the soprano section, allowing them to feel a little more secure, and less exposed, therefore singing with a freer tone. The basses were located behind the sopranos in the third row. This was due to the fact that often the basses were on the root of pitches, which would give a tonal center to the sopranos, allowing for enhanced intonation. In the back were the tenors. Often the tenors were the loudest of all the sections, so the further from the audience, the better.

Noble’s mixed formation wasn’t truly a mixed formation as one would think. There was order to it. The choir would be horizontally lined up in a standard SATB formation, and the same part would be lined up directly behind the front row. (See figure 9). Noble would rework voice placement to also

take a choir member's height into consideration. With blend a major factor, he would put the taller of two blending members in the back, with the shorter in front. He would go on in this manner until each section was placed.

There were two major underlying factors of voice placement. 1. Proper placement would enhance blend, eliminating strong and weak pockets, providing a less-sectionalized sound, and enhancing intonation by hearing all parts easily, and 2. Placement allowed the singers to create space between them. "Space between singers is a basic rule of thumb! A crowded choir loses freedom of sound, blend, and even volume."⁹⁰

In tonal style, Noble's sopranos needed to be light and able to float effortlessly in the upper extremities of the range. They needed to also be able to easily access the mid and lower ranges, allowing for easy, dance-like transitions in notes. The altos were, as Noble put it, "hooters". They must sound 'owl-like', with a round fullness achieved by connecting from the muscles of the abdomen, and keeping the pharynxes open, allowing for optimal resonance. Tenors had to be of a lyric quality, and light in nature. Tenors are what made the music dance. Noble would refer to the tenors as the "lovers", and must sing in that manner. His basses were rich and colorful, but a little lighter in tone than other Lutheran Choral Tradition choirs. They knew how to "bring it" when the music called for a more full sound. This was most

⁹⁰ Ibid. 47.

likely due to the influence of both Robert Shaw with keeping light to emphasize rhythm, and Paul Salamunovich, who would instruct basses to internalize the note being sung as one octave higher, and apply those principles to the notes...in essence, allowing the note to float rather than press.

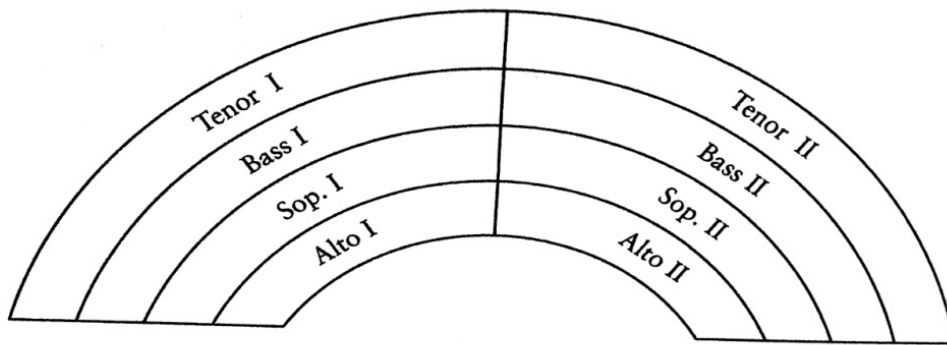


Figure 5.1A - Eight-part Choir

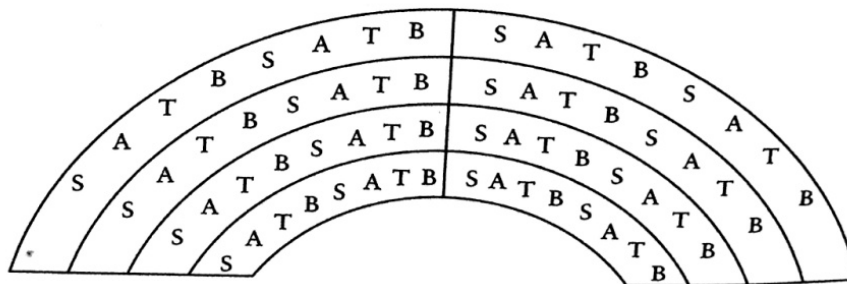


Figure 5.1B - Mixed

Figure 10. Eight-part and mixed formation of Weston Noble.⁹¹

⁹¹ Ibid.,48.

Overall, Weston Noble brought something unprecedented to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, and even further, to the choral scene in the United States. He taught the choral scene the true meaning of emotion in music. Everything had a meaning and purpose to Noble, and this meaning or purpose could be reflected in the music being performed. He taught the choral scene about vulnerability in choral music, establishing that choral music is different than instrumental music because of the innate feelings one puts in to their personal voices. He was heavily influenced by Robert Shaw, and emphasized precision of rhythm, with light, precise consonants, allowing the vowel to begin on the beat, allowing for a released, free sound. He emphasized the weak vs. strong beats (arsic vs. thetic), allowing for him to live by his motto that “all music must dance.” Finally, Weston Noble taught that music was the voice of the spirit, and was a way to connect to a higher being.

2.5. KENNETH JENNINGS

2.5.1. *KENNETH JENNINGS MUSICAL INFLUENCES*

Kenneth Jennings was born in Connecticut on May 13, 1925. Unlike his predecessors at St. Olaf College, his family did not have any particular talents for music. However, as a child, Jennings enjoyed his piano lessons, and showed great promise in music.

Upon graduating high school where he was honored as salutatorian, Jennings was drafted into the army, eventually finding a home in the fifth U.S. Infantry Regiment, Seventy-First Division. It was in the army that Jennings met Luther Onerheim, a St. Olaf graduate, who studied under F. Melius Christiansen. With Onerheim, Jennings played organ and piano at church services, sang in the choir, helped lead the choir, and was a soloist.

Onerheim was an extremely talented musician, and an equally talented salesman. Onerheim convinced his superiors in the army to allow and support an army choir, and the Fifth Infantry Chorus, also known as the Soldier Chorus, was born. The choir was very successful, and held the same high standards found in the Lutheran Choral Tradition, including attentiveness to blend, precision of pitch, and singing of music from memory. The choir not only sang for weekly church services, but also performed frequently in Europe, specifically in Germany. After the war, they performed in many army camps, USO shows, and even the Salzburg Music Festival, frequenting many events for entertaining soldiers. “Given such a program, sung from memory, a cappella, and Onerheim’s emphasis on covered vowels, staying on pitch, and unity of tone, one clearly recognizes that the choral principles of F. Melius Christiansen had found their way to war-torn Germany and Austria.”⁹²

Following his stint in the army, Jennings transitioned back to normal US life, studying piano with the late Onerheim’s wife, where he heard a recording of St. Olaf Choir. After discussing the school, Mrs. Onerheim suggested that Jennings apply. He was, however, originally denied acceptance to St. Olaf College, due to the return of countless veterans, which left no space for more applicants. Jennings went on to apply to Colorado College to study with the renowned composer Roy Harris. On his way out to Colorado,

⁹² Shaw, 379.

Jennings made a stop in Northfield at St. Olaf, meeting with Carl Swanson, who was the Dean of Men. The two talked about St. Olaf and the possibility of enrolling at the school. Upon looking at the Jennings' records, Swanson stated "I guess you'll be a good enough risk."⁹³

One week later, Jennings began his college life at St. Olaf College. Upon auditioning in hopes for a major in piano, Olaf Christiansen also requested for Jennings to try to sing. "Everyone auditions for the St. Olaf Choir."⁹⁴ Jennings was passed on to the second round of auditions for the St. Olaf Choir where he was able to sing a melodic progression that all other students failed to repeat from memory. Due to this, Jennings was accepted into the St. Olaf Choir, where he was in small company as one of the very few singers accepted to the choir all four years of their college lives, with three of those years in the role of section leader with occasional assistant conducting duties his senior year. He also studied voice, piano, and composition.

Upon graduation from St. Olaf College, Jennings continued his studies at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, completing a Master of Music degree in 1951, studying composition. Jennings immediately found work at a small North Carolina college, Mitchell College, where he taught for two years. During this time, he also conducted an elderly choir in the Associated

⁹³ Ibid., 380.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 380.

Reformed Presbyterian Church, founded the Statesville Oratorio Society, and traveled to Oslo, Norway in the summer of 1952 to direct a summer school choir at the University of Oslo.

St. Olaf College, however, had Kenneth Jennings on their radar. Olaf Christiansen sought out Jennings, and the college extended an invitation to return to his alma mater as a faculty member. Upon discussion with friends and colleagues, Jennings accepted the position, while continuing his studies in the summertime in New York City and University of Minnesota, studying at the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary, along with studying at Columbia University. In 1958, Jennings took a leave of absence for two years to pursue a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Illinois. He completed the degree in 1966, where he studied with Jean Berger and later, Harold Decker.

Jennings' main duty, prior to being appointed the conductor of the St. Olaf Choir in 1967, was conducting the Chapel Choir. Jennings built the program into much more than a preparatory choir for the St. Olaf Choir, introducing larger choral works, such as masses, passions, and oratorios. He received much support from the band and orchestra directors, and a choir that performed major works at St. Olaf was realized. Major works presented including the following during Jennings' tenure with the Chapel Choir: Bach's *Magnificat*, *Cantata 11*, *Cantata 80*, *Passion According to St. John*, and

Passion According to St. Matthew, Fauré's *Requiem*, Honegger's *King David*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*.⁹⁵ This experience was one of the major inspirations to his exploration of new repertoire upon the arrival of Jennings tenure with the St. Olaf Choir. "When Jennings became St. Olaf Choir director, he believed that the time had come to start performing the larger works."⁹⁶

2.5.2. KENNETH JENNINGS TAKES OVER THE ST. OLAF CHOIR

Kenneth Jennings taking over of the reigns of the St. Olaf Choir brought many changes to the already world-class choir. Firstly, Jennings introduced a program that would also occasionally incorporate accompaniment. Secondly, programming choices varied much more from that of both of the Christiansens. Not only was music with accompaniment considered, but so were movements from major works, music of contemporary composers, such as Penderecki and Schönberg, along with keeping the music of the early masters, of the Lutheran tradition, and "the hits". Thirdly, Jennings allowed for a freer sound, especially in the female voices. Fourthly, Jennings introduced a more "worldly" choral music view, rather than a purely religious overview. Rather than focusing on the religious meaning of music

⁹⁵ Ibid., 389-390.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Jennings, interview by Joseph Shaw, October 11, 1995.

that was apparent with his predecessors, Jennings' sought out music for its high artistic value. This included music of both the secular and religious nature. Overall, Jennings brought a new level of musicality to the choir that has been at the forefront of the choral world for the past 60 years.

Reviews on Jennings' first tour in 1969 were mostly exceptional and consistent. Most commented on an improvement to the already high level of artistry, the crack discipline of the choir, attention to precision of pitch and intonation, and added comments regarding the warmth of the sound and the expansion of a wider repertoire. Other than a couple of reviews of one particular concert in Minneapolis in which the concert hall had notably poor acoustics, reviews were gleaming. "Dr. Jennings' authority with the choir showed itself in many ways, and always without exaggeration or self-consciousness about technique." The writer went on to comment about the choir's tone by stating "an elegant naturalness."⁹⁷

During Jennings' time with the St. Olaf Choir, there were many highlights. Along with the expanded repertoire, Jennings searched for music from cultures different from that of the USA and Europe. Jennings' inclusion of the music of the Orient, along with beginning to introduce the music of Latin and South America, found its way into the programming at St. Olaf. The

⁹⁷ Stanley Butler, "St. Olaf Choir Gains Applause of Big Audience," *Salem Statesman*, February 21, 1969.

choir also began touring internationally more frequently, touring Europe often, and opening a new path with two tours to the Orient, traveling to Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China in 1986, and to Korea in 1988, where the choir was featured in the Olympic Arts Festival just preceding the summer Olympic games in Seoul. These tours, under the direction of Jennings, expanded the reach of the St. Olaf Choir and the Lutheran Choral Tradition even further around the globe, introducing the beauty of the tradition to new faces worldwide.

2.5.3. KENNETH JENNINGS' CHORAL CONCEPT

Kenneth Jennings had an overall vision that was not so different than that of his predecessors; however, his choral sound took a major leap forward in the evolution of choral tone and production. The goals stated in the 1970 tour program by Jennings were “To create a choir of high musical purpose and achievement; to communicate a religious commitment; and to offer the audience as well as the Choir an enriching musical experience.”⁹⁸

What Kenneth Jennings brought to the choral table vocally was a warmer choral sound. Gone were the days of shaping the soprano tone to that of a boy choir sound idealized by both F. Melius and Olaf Christiansen.

⁹⁸ 1970 tour program, St. Olaf Choir. See Appendix D for full 1970 program list.

Rather, Jennings, for the first time, allowed the women to sound like women, allowing freedom in their voices and allowing for the treble sound to be distinctively feminine. “Gone is the distinctive icy tone quality which marked the choir’s singing under Dr. Olaf C. Christiansen.... Replacing it is a more vibrant, warm tone – a resonant, lively, brilliant sound that rings with vitality and conviction.”⁹⁹ Jennings emphasized that the sound must be free and natural; not only in the treatment of the voice itself, but also in the direction that the voice naturally moves the music and musical line.

The adaptation of the choir to Jennings’ idea of a free, natural tone led the choir to develop a brilliant musical phrase and vocal line. Under Jennings, the choir was able to build an exceptional musical phrase, and sing with exceptional sensitivity and attention to the nuances within the music itself and the text being sung. Jennings catered his vocal ideal to the students with whom he was working. He carefully considered his singers’ strengths and limitations and developed choral tone and phrasing in regard to his considerations. The sound was very lyrical with vitality and conviction, with sensitivity to the musical phrase.

Although the choir was still characterized as a straight-tone choir, vibrancy was starting to be heard through the choir, due to the focus on a natural, free tone. Upon talking with one student, Virginia Bergquist Bowles

⁹⁹ Shaw, 392.

class of '70, she recalled Jennings telling her “Ginny, I want to hear the sound *you* make.” She went on to say “Giving a person permission to be free and to sing their sound is truly the best gift of all.”¹⁰⁰ This quote emphasizes also the gratitude and excitement of the choir in being granted ‘permission’ to sing as themselves. It gave each singer a sense of confidence in their own musicianship and a much needed moral boost in their music making. Whether initially intended or not, what Jennings did was create an atmosphere of choristers who had extreme pride in not only their sound, but the sound that they created, essentially making the St. Olaf Choir their sound, with Jennings acting as the link, leading the choir to their own choral sound. Sublimating the voice to fit the ideal tone, although not gone, was guided in a collaborative effort between teacher and student. “Listeners were hearing a tone that was reminiscent of the earlier sound of the Choir but yet one with less rigidity, greater freedom and flexibility, and a new warmth.”¹⁰¹

Jennings shied away from labeling a certain vowel as his ideal of color. Rather, he emphasized natural inflection in speech within the vocal line, lending to neutral vowels.¹⁰² In order to achieve a neutral vowel, Jennings called upon certain specific vocalizes to stress the natural inflection of a

¹⁰⁰Virginia Bergquist Bowles, letter to Kenneth Jennings, January, 1990.

¹⁰¹ Shaw, 403.

¹⁰² Zabriskie, 37.

neutral vowel through a sensitive, lyrical music line using natural speech patterns in the melody. (See figure 11)

The use of warm-ups that have a song-like feel to them not only accomplished the multiple tasks listed above, but also provided an avenue more conducive to the transfer of the technical concept to the repertoire sung in choir. Rather than singing on a specific vowel or word, the adding of text gives an extra sense to the singer to think of a musical phrase, giving natural emphasis to the highs and lows within the phrases being sung. They allow the singer to ‘hone in’ on sculpting the musical phrase, developing the singer’s knowledge of their voice and its limitations. “Never sing louder than beautiful.”¹⁰³ This quote by René Clausen sums up phrasing and sensitivity in the Lutheran Choral Tradition. By singing phrases with texts, the student can hone in on this concept, and understand the limits of beauty in their musical phrasing.



¹⁰³ René Clausen. Interview by Ryan Goessl, February, 2014.

Figure 11. A typical Kenneth Jennings warm-up, emphasizing lyricism and sensitivity to musical phrase with adherence to neutral matching neutral vowels and a connected, smooth legato phrase throughout the vocal range.¹⁰⁴

Consonants with Jennings were approached in a similar manner to Weston Noble, based off the teachings of Robert Shaw. Rhythmic precision was the foundation of consonants. The consonant must begin before the beat, allowing the vowel to begin on the beat. This gives the musical line direction, and prevents the stagnation of the musical line. However, Jennings greatly considered the style of the music that was being performed, and its effect in regards to his treatment of consonants. “Jennings’ approach to consonants also changed because of varying styles of music. Some styles called for a linear, legato approach while others called for a more angular approach.”¹⁰⁵

Connection of the singers with each other was of major importance to Jennings. Singers must be unified not only in vowels, consonants, and tone, but also in non-musical aspects, such as posture and correct utilization of the breath. Also of importance was the relaxed, yet unified nature of the mind and spirit, in order to sing with precision and clarity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Jennings, *Sing Legato: A Collection of Original Studies in Vocal Production and Musicianship*, (San Diego: Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1982), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Zabriskie, 37.

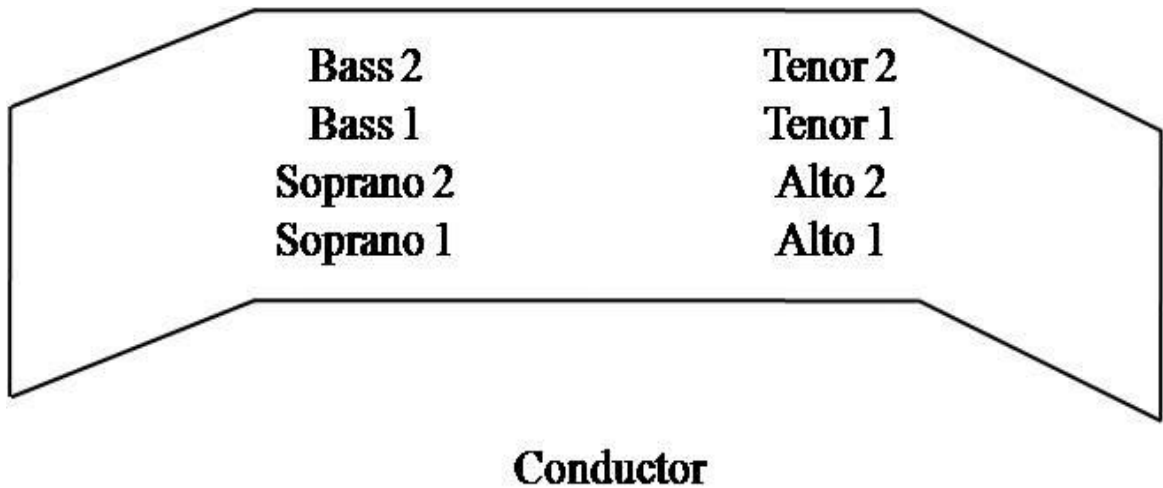
¹⁰⁶ Armstrong, “Celebrating 75 years.”

Jennings selected his singers in a two-part fashion, somewhat similar to that of Olaf Christiansen. The first audition was an individual interview. The singers sang a song that they prepared. This allowed Jennings to identify the musicianship of the auditionee, including pitch, rhythmical sense, sensitivity to the vocal phrase and nuances, timbre, flexibility of the voice, and personal preference. Jennings also had the singers repeat from memory tonal patterns that were introduced on the piano in order to test the auditionees on their musical response and memory recall. Range, intonation, and interval mastery were also evaluated through this process. Finally, sight-singing was included to evaluate the student's cognitive music abilities. However, the importance of sight-singing was inferior to musicianship and personal drive and excitement of vocal music of the student. The second audition was a callback audition where Jennings could trim down the more qualified applicants, accepting the singers who best fit his ideal sound and need for the choir.

Lyricism was the most important factor in the classification of his singers into sections. Those who sang effortlessly and lyrically through the upper passaggio were generally classified as 1sts in their section, provided they did not go sharp or flat. Heavier voices and those who could not negotiate passaggios freely were classified as 2nds. Alto 2's had a well-developed lower range, while alto 1's were generally lighter in timbre, without a developed upper range. The same held true in the respective men's sections;

the heavier sounding with a dominating lower range as bass 2's, lyrical singers as bass ones and tenor 1's, and those tenors unable to easily negotiate the upper passaggio as tenor 2's. The head voice must be brought down, however, in all sections.

In regards to balance, bass was the predominant section. This was needed, in Jennings' view, to give the foundation of sound, and provided a foundation for the other sections to build on the chordal structure of the music. "A typical numerical balance between the sections included ten second basses, eight baritones, six second-tenors, five first-tenors, nine second-altos, eight first altos, nine second-sopranos, and ten first-sopranos."¹⁰⁷



¹⁰⁷ Zabriskie, 35-36.

Figure 12. Kenneth Jennings standing arrangement of St. Olaf Choir.¹⁰⁸

Jennings would situate the sopranos on his left, with basses behind, and altos on his right, with tenors behind. Like F. Melius Christiansen, and to an extent, Olaf Christiansen, Jennings also placed a small section of singers in the middle, usually three or four singers per section, to use as a semi-chorus for suitable passages, to garner an added nuance and sensitivity to the musical phrase being sung. Larger voices would be placed in the middle, with individualistic voices on the ends. Consideration was also given to singers with better ears, who were often paired next to others with less developed ears, in order to develop efficiency in the music, creating the highest quality of sound that could be possible.¹⁰⁹

Overall, Jennings was a game-changer in the choral music field. He emphasized the choir singing naturally and freely as a cohesive unit, with uniformity of neutral vowels and consonants, based on precision of rhythm. The lyrical phrase was evident throughout the entire range of his singers. He utilized bringing the light-mechanism of the voice down throughout the entire range, allowing his singers to ‘float’ their sound without backing off. He allowed his singers to be more individualistic while adhering to the ideal

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Armstrong, “Celebrating 75 Years.”

sound he was striving for. By allowing the individuality of the voice, Jennings created a choir whose members had pride in their unique sound, building confidence in themselves, and the choir as a cohesive unit. He widened the scope of music repertoire, exploring many genres and cultures, introducing a hint of Latin America, the Orient, and lesser known European composers to the choral world in the United States. Finally, in the St. Olaf tour book of 1970, Jennings summed his concept up perfectly, stating “Sing, think, feel your best so others may hear, respond, be filled, and renewed.”¹¹⁰ One of the many students that Jennings influenced positively was none other than St. Olaf Choir’s current conductor, Dr. Anton Armstrong, who Jennings handed the St. Olaf Choir reigns to shortly after the Korea tour, in 1990.

2.6. ANTON ARMSTRONG

2.6.1. ANTON ARMSTRONG’S MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Born in 1956, Dr. Anton Armstrong is the current conductor of the St. Olaf Choir, a position that he has held since 1990. His father was a tailor and his mother worked as a nurse and in retail. They attended the Lutheran Church of Epiphany, where Armstrong’s musical talents were quickly discovered. Enrolling in music lessons at the age of 10, Armstrong showed quick promise with his teacher, Mrs. Amelia Samuel. Under her tutelage, Armstrong learned

¹¹⁰ “From Kenneth Jennings,” 1970 St. Olaf Tour Book, quoted in Shaw, 411.

to play music by reading music, rather than just playing by ear. She taught him for 8 years, and her influence was profound.¹¹¹

Another major influence in Armstrong's musical development was Carol Weber, who was a graduate of Westminster Choir College. She, along with her husband Carl, were also members of the Lutheran Church of the Epiphany, and guided Armstrong musically in his formative years. "(Carol and Carl) brought this belief about a community of faith, in terms of their choir work...It should literally be from the crib to the grave, so there should be opportunities for people to sing at all ages."¹¹² Weber taught Armstrong in the church choir to sing healthily, and with conviction to music. One evening, the Weber's took Armstrong and his parents to see a concert of the American Boychoir. This experience proved to be a catalyst for Armstrong's future career.

Armstrong enrolled in the American Boychoir, but not without initial struggle. Due to the cost, his parents initially weren't able to afford the tuition. However, due to a generous scholarship, along with the persistence of Armstrong to follow his dream, his parents eventually agreed, and he was a member of the boarding school from 1969 to 1971. "At that young age, (Armstrong) had unusual musical and cultural opportunities."¹¹³ These

¹¹¹ Shaw, 507.

¹¹² Anton Armstrong, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 19, 2014, transcript.

¹¹³ Shaw, 508.

opportunities included high level music instruction and extensive touring opportunities, domestically and abroad. “And that really was a seminal experience as a youngster that really lit my fire for choral singing.”¹¹⁴ This experience, along with his continuing association with the choir as assistant director of the summer camp, director of the summer program, and involvement on the Board of Trustees, speaks to the amount of mutual personal and musical respect that Armstrong and the American Boychoir had for each other.

Following graduation from high school, Armstrong attended St. Olaf College. Conducting the Liturgical Choir for three years, section leader of Chapel Choir, and forming a chamber choir in his sophomore year showed the promise Armstrong had in the field of music, and further in the leadership of outstanding music ensembles. Armstrong also was a member of the St. Olaf Choir for two-and-a-half years, studied vocal pedagogy, choral, and instrumental conducting, and was invited to conduct the Manitou Singers his senior year. “For Anton, these experiences, added to his work with the Liturgical Choir, fostered a growing interest in conducting.”¹¹⁵ Also important to note are the major influences on Armstrong, notably Jennings in conducting, Robert Scholz in conducting and voice, and Alice Larsen, voice

¹¹⁴ Armstrong, interview.

¹¹⁵ Shaw, 512.

teacher and conductor, who made a strong impression on Armstrong in regards to the natural beauty of women's voices.

Following St. Olaf College, Armstrong attended the master's degree program at the University of Illinois, studying with Harold Decker, where he also conducted the choir at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church for two years. Armstrong was offered a sabbatical replacement at Calvin College, which was extended into a three year contract. He continued on to Michigan State University in 1983, studying with Charles Smith, where he taught choral conducting and literature, along with conducting the M.S.U. Women's Glee Club as a graduate teaching fellow. He completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1987. Following completion of his Doctor of Musical Arts degree, Armstrong was invited back to Calvin College at the rank of Associate Professor of Music, teaching the Campus Choir, choral conducting, vocal-choral methods, and music appreciation. Armstrong also was the conductor of the Alumni Choir, a choir founded in 1977, now known as a semi-professional choir with a high level of musical artistry, under the tutelage of Dr. Pearl Shangkuan.

2.6.2. ANTON ARMSTRONG TAKES OVER THE ST.

OLAF CHOIR

The year 1990 marked the retirement of Kenneth Jennings at St. Olaf College. This provided the opportunity for Armstrong to shine at a national and international level. At only 34 years old, Armstrong was the youngest conductor to ever lead the choir. The choir took immediate fondness to the young conductor, even prior to his appointment to the college. At his interview and audition at the college, he endured a weary choir drained from the week's worth of work. In this moment, he demanded of himself to connect with the students and establish himself in the eyes of the college. Speaking to the choir, "I know you're tired. But this may be the only time I get to conduct you. If it is I'm going to have the best time I can, and I want you to summon up full energy, sit up, and sing! If this is a song of praise then I need you to sing it that way. Let's have a good time and let's sing!" This comment, though risky, had the intended effect on the choir, who responded to a high degree, singing the music given to them to the best of their abilities.¹¹⁶

Armstrong thrived in his first years with the college and the choir. As with the previous conductors, Armstrong strived to find his niche with the choir and college. He did so by furthering the concept brought to St. Olaf Choir by his predecessor, Kenneth Jennings, who expanded the repertoire to include the music of Latin and South America, along with lesser known European composers. "Armstrong let it be known that he intended to broaden

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 506.

the scope of the Choir's repertoire without laying aside the traditions on which the College was built."¹¹⁷ Along with continuing the Norwegian tradition with songs that included "Beautiful Savior" and "Jeg Er Så Glad", he also introduced folk-music, African, Caribbean and Latin music, and spirituals, such as "Keep Your Lamps", arranged by André Thomas, and a South African hymn "Haleluya! Pelo Tsa Rona". This has offered a wider variety of music culture for the choir and audiences, and has given an opportunity for the choir to live up to the motto dictated by F. Melius Christiansen 65 years earlier. "It is necessary for us to realize that musical expression, if it is sincere, must change to a certain extent with changes in the thought and outlook of succeeding generations. We cannot expect the young people of today to rest contented with singing exactly what was being sung two centuries ago, if it has been outmoded in spirit and manner."¹¹⁸ One of the missions of the St. Olaf Choir, and that of their conductor, has always been to expand on the repertoire being sung, allowing for additional avenues to praise God while giving justice to the music at hand.

2.6.3. ANTON ARMSTRONG'S CHORAL CONCEPT

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 521.

¹¹⁸ Frances Boardman, "Ideals of St. Olaf Lutheran Choir Explained: A Personal Interview with Its Director" (Northfield, MN: St. Olaf College, July 5, 1925), 6

“Body, mind, spirit, voice; it takes a whole person to sing and rejoice.”

- Helen Kemp

Helen Kemp is a major influence and mentor for Anton Armstrong, and his philosophy on music. Armstrong’s basis for choral tone is a holistic approach to singing. As stated in the quote above, to sing, one must incorporate body, mind, spirit, and voice. Unless all aspects are incorporated into singing, a singer is not “whole”. It is a concept very similar in nature to Weston Noble’s concept of choral music, to which Armstrong has occasionally referred. Noble encouraged physical vigor in his rehearsals, while connecting to the text and music in a spiritual manner. “Noble’s interpretations occasionally are marked by a distinctively personal and at times a more than usually emotional approach to standard repertoire.”¹¹⁹ This concept is remarkably similar to Kemp’s thoughts on singing, connecting all facets of the human experience to music.

Armstrong does not often directly address the concept of blend, but instead insists on the ensemble constantly listening to each other. He strives for precision of vowel formation, tone, rhythm, diction, and phrasing. When all falls into place, blend naturally occurs within Armstrong’s St. Olaf Choir. This is due to the personnel within the ranks of the choir. Like

¹¹⁹ Benson.

Jennings before him, Armstrong seeks singers with a lyrical quality to their voices. He stresses the importance of an art-song approach to choral music, where not just lyricism is present, but also the importance of communicating the text in performance. This is attained by, like Jennings, stressing the importance of bringing the head-voice down, utilizing the light-mechanism in singing. “He created a blended sound [sic] was created by selecting only those singers who possessed a lyric tone quality.”¹²⁰ He allows, as Jennings did before him, the singer to have freedom of expression in their lyrical voice, which in turn allows the aesthetic qualities of the individual singer’s voice, and in turn the tone of the entire ensemble, to come to fruition.

Armstrong relies heavily on the style of the choral pieces being performed to bring out the natural beauty of the choral tone. “I (sometimes) let the choir sound in some years almost very raw, because it had to emulate, not imitate, but emulate more of the aboriginal sound that she was going after (when referring to Sarah Hopkin’s “Past Life Melodies” and how the choir addresses different colors to emphasize the tone). I allow...a wider use...I never ask my singers to blend, and I never ask them to use straight tone.”¹²¹

¹²⁰ Zabriskie, 77.

¹²¹ Armstrong, interview.

One of the concepts that contributes profoundly to the success of the St. Olaf Choir is the idea of “listening in ensemble”. Only when a choir truly listens can the effect of blend be present. “When you do listen and then the vowels are matched, the center of pitch is matched, consonants and articulation about the vowel on the beat, the consonant before the beat, when all those things...and the timbres are balanced, then you get this effect of blend...I think of the choral tone as a mosaic. And I want to play with that mosaic, but how I achieve that is in the placement of the voices, so that I find voices that will complement and balance each other.”¹²²

The fact that Armstrong stresses lyricism throughout the entire range of the voice was a heavy factor in his selection of singers for the choir. This allows Armstrong to attain the tone he desires without the need to subjugate the voice to fit his ideal. The singers naturally sing with the freedom of tone sought after by Armstrong, which allows an ensemble tone without tension, but rather, with flexibility and natural focus.

As with past conductors, Armstrong auditions his singers first in an individual interview, learning about the personality and drive of each student. He also listens to the range, lyric qualities, flexibility, and technical prowess of each auditionee. (See figure 16)¹²³

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Zabriskie, 78

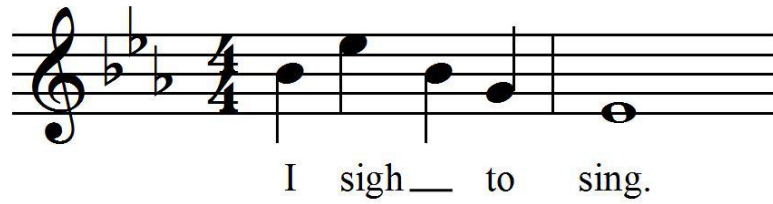


Figure 13. Vocalise used in St. Olaf Choir auditions by Anton Armstrong.¹²⁴

Similarly to Jennings and Olaf Christiansen prior to him, Armstrong tests the musical ability and memory retention of auditionees. He does this by playing melodic patterns, increasing in difficulty. This also allows Armstrong to listen to numerous aspects of the singers passively, namely intonation, musicality, and the ear quality. Unlike his predecessors, Armstrong values sight-reading in a higher fashion. However, not only musical qualities are taken into consideration, but so are personal attributes, such as academics, relationships with others, and willingness to commit to the needs of the choir.

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In regards to diction and rhythm, Armstrong emphasizes the clarity of text. Due to the types of voices selected for the choir, this concept is picked up on rather quickly. However, much time is spent on pronunciation of the text and of languages to properly execute the message of the text. Ending consonants are of extreme importance. Shadow vowels are often incorporated

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

to bring out the clarity of the consonant, allowing the energy and vitality of the tone to be present through the end of the phrase and into the subsequent breath. Pronunciation is further emphasized by feeling the ‘inner subdivision’ within the music. Armstrong stresses the importance of subdividing, consistent with the teachings of Shaw and Noble, to utilize the extension of energy through the phrase, allowing the phrase to be sculpted into its ideal.

The use of vowels are approached in a similar fashion to Armstrong’s predecessors. The /o/ vowel is present throughout the voice while utilizing space in the pharynxes to allow for proper resonance, resulting in the overtones to be effectively present. In essence, vowels are thought of in a vertical fashion, allowing for the sides of the buccal cavity to lean toward each other. Dr. Dennis Darling, retired professor of Music Education at Luther College, emphasizes always singing with a tall and skinny face, and not with a short, fat face.¹²⁶ This allows the vowels to be tall in nature, and not horizontal, allowing for the soft palate to be sufficiently raised, providing optimal resonance.

The choir is placed in a similar fashion to other choirs in the Lutheran Choral Tradition, namely sopranos and altos in the front, on the left and right side respectively, with the basses behind the sopranos, and tenors behind the altos. 2nd's are usually placed in the front, with 1st's behind, to allow for an

¹²⁶ Dr. Dennis Darling, conversations with the author.

environment of lyric vocal freedom of the 1st's. This also allows the conductor to better hear the 2nd's. (See figure 14) Basses are the foundation of the St. Olaf Choir with Armstrong. A strong bass section with a full sound is imperative to the choir. Sopranos should be equally present to balance the basses. ¹²⁷

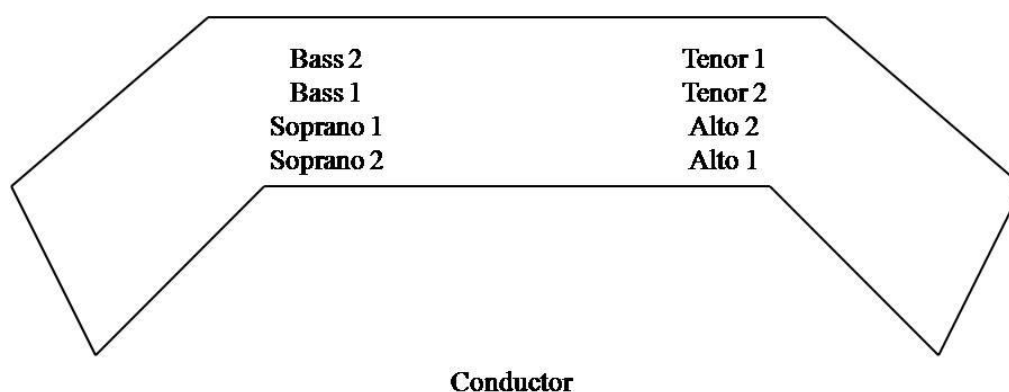


Figure 14. Block formation of St. Olaf Choir with Anton Armstrong¹²⁸

Overall, Armstrong has continued many of the traditions of his predecessors, and specifically his teacher, Kenneth Jennings. Expansion of the choral repertoire is prevalent in the choir, to include music of the Caribbean and South America, Africa, and African-American spirituals, while continuing to cultivate the traditional music that has built the choir's reputation. He

¹²⁷ Zabriskie, 80.

¹²⁸ Zabriskie, 81.

emphasizes a top-down approach, using the light-mechanism, and nurtures a lyric tone in his singers. Singers are selected based heavily on their lyrical ability, musicality, and personal attributes. He does not actively work on blend, but rather, when all the points line up, namely vowel uniformity, rhythm, vocal technique, and freedom and flexibility of the voice, blend will be a natural phenomenon. The choir, in tradition with the Lutheran custom, emphasizes dedication of each singer to the whole of the choir, allowing each singer to connect to each other, effectively emphasizing the overall meaning of the text, its relation to the music, and successfully portraying the message the composer is trying to relay.

2.7. RENÉ CLAUSEN

2.7.1. RENÉ CLAUSEN'S MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Dr. René Clausen was born in 1953 in Faribault, Minnesota, approximately 15 miles from St. Olaf College. He moved frequently as a child throughout the Midwest and California, seeing much of the US, and experiencing a variety of American cultures. Unlike conductors previously mentioned in this study, Clausen did not study music formally as a child. It wasn't until the seventh grade that Clausen began to study music, playing saxophone in the band. Clausen's

interest was instantly realized, and he absorbed music like a sponge, also learning the flute, clarinet, trumpet, French horn, and any other instrument the school had at its disposal. He began experimenting with composition, teaching himself music theory and orchestration.

While in high school, the St. Olaf Choir took a tour to the West Coast, and performed near Clausen's California home. Attending the concert, Clausen was enamored with choral music, attending the concert on two more occasions on their tour in nearby cities. The experiences that brought Clausen to love music drove him to pursue music in college, and he enrolled at St. Olaf College in 1970.¹²⁹

Clausen excelled in college, studying choral music and conducting with Kenneth Jennings. St. Olaf was the right place for a person like Clausen, as it provided the academic atmosphere most conducive to his needs. Jennings' tutelage was instrumental in the development of Clausen's musical ability. Jennings, an accomplished composer and staple of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, provided guidance and expertise that was necessary for Clausen to be the influential composer and conductor that he is today. Clausen's catch-phrase "Never sing louder than beautiful"¹³⁰ is a strong testament to Jennings' influence on Clausen, who emphasized a lyrical, non-pushing phrase with sensitivity to the vocal line throughout the entire range of the voice, along with his innate

¹²⁹ Armendarez, 83, 84.

¹³⁰ Concordia Choir rehearsal, attended by Ryan Goessl, February 14, 2014.

understanding of the strengths and limitations of the college-aged voice. This philosophy is considered constantly by Clausen in his quest for beauty of tone.

Following St. Olaf, Clausen went on to study at the University of Illinois, where his teachers included Harold Decker and James Bailey. He completed his Master of Music degree, and studied a full year of his doctorate, completing all the classes that required him to be on campus. After this year, Clausen was offered a job teaching at Wichita State University, where he was responsible for graduate choral literature, the top undergraduate choir, and choral conducting. His first job spoke to his abilities as a musician. “It was an interesting experience (at Wichita State) because I was twenty-four and some of the grad students were older than I was.”¹³¹ Clausen went on to teach this job for six years before leaving for West Texas State University, taking over the job of past ACDA President, Hugh Sanders, as Director of Choral Activities.

However, Clausen’s ambition to teach in a college embedded in the Lutheran College Tradition was strong. “One of the goals I had was to be at a Lutheran liberal arts college similar to the experience I had at St. Olaf... Those are prime experiences in your life, informative experiences in your life. And although I enjoyed my university work a lot, I didn’t feel that my ultimate calling was going to be there.”¹³² After two years at West Texas State University, Paul J. Christiansen announced his plans to retire after fifty years at Concordia-

¹³¹ René Clausen, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 14, 2014, transcript.

¹³² Ibid.

Moorhead. Clausen applied for the position, and has been there for twenty-eight years.

2.7.2. CLAUSEN TAKES OVER THE CONCORDIA CHOIR

Clausen's impact at Concordia, and on the Lutheran Choral Tradition itself, has been immense. Known even more for his composing as well as his conducting, Clausen has continued the tradition by writing some of today's most profound music. "As a choir member, he practiced and heard this choral sonority (in St. Olaf Choir) for an hour and a half each day. As a result, he was, in turn, learning this sound through osmosis. It was inevitable that the choral resonance became something with which he was enamored. The sound became internalized and for this reason it was natural, almost second nature, for him to write for the choral genre."¹³³ Clausen often emphasizes his ability to "absorb" material. He grasps concepts very quickly and efficiently; therefore, he picked up not only the insurmountable amount of information from his formal studies, but also from his personal studies and drive to learn.

As a composer, Clausen has written more than seventy choral pieces. His music spans from motets written in Renaissance style, to homophonic anthems, to bi-tonal music of varying degrees of difficulty. Clausen often intersperses different languages in his music, most notably Latin, English, and Hebrew. His

¹³³ Armendarez, 84.

most famous choral piece, “Set Me as a Seal” from his larger work *A New Creation* is an example of Clausen’s loyalty to the Lutheran Choral Tradition. It is in ternary form, which is consistent with a lot (but certainly not all) of choral music in the Lutheran Tradition. It is a piece that perfectly expresses the text musically and appropriately, a common trait in the Lutheran Choral Tradition. “I am very proud of that piece because I think it captured the essence of that text.”¹³⁴

Clausen is a very philosophical person in his approach to the choir, especially with their repertoire and rehearsal schedule. He carefully maps out the music to make sure that the entire program makes sense in the manner that the musical selections lead into each other effectively and speak to the meaning or concept he is trying to portray. Often his concerts have themes. For example, the 2014 choir had a set of songs for multi-choir and also for an anti-violence set. He also spends considerable time mapping out the rehearsals, not longer than one week at a time. He will then evaluate the choir for the next week, and what needs to get done, effectively planning his preparation for the upcoming concerts. This allows for the analytical side of Clausen to shine. Along with mapping out the schedule of rehearsals, Clausen maps out the intricacies of the music being prepared and performed prior to all rehearsals. He is prepared thoroughly for each rehearsal due to this “mapping”. “I’m a tremendous believer in knowing the score absolutely, in owning the score and knowing my vision of it before I walk into the first rehearsal. Because I think without ownership of the score, you’re

¹³⁴ René Clausen, interview by Christina Marie Armendarez, March, 2003.

taking advantage of your students. You're not teaching them anymore, you're learning with them. And not that you don't learn with them every day, but so much of what I've learned to be effective as a choral director is doing my homework."¹³⁵ The ability of the conductor to map out every aspect of his/her job, musically and non-musically, is an indispensable and necessary asset of the successful conductor and teacher.

Clausen's fit into Concordia-Moorhead, and to the Lutheran Choral Tradition is almost perfect. His scope is on the ideals of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, focusing on sensitivity and musical beauty. Of all the current Lutheran Choral Tradition conductors and choirs in recent history, Clausen and his choirs are the closest to the ideal of the Lutheran Choral Tradition in the current day. They dedicate themselves to the music, most importantly, and the message the music brings out.

I come back to some of the things I said at the beginning, and that is this submission to the discipline that it takes to be excellent. That excellence, that removal of...what our goal is, is to remove imperfection to highest degree so that what the composer said may be unadorned, directly related to the audience. So, pursuit of excellence [sic]. And I think pursuit of technical excellence and the discipline that it takes to get there. Now, we're doing that, as another guiding principle I think for me is to only do outstanding literature. I'm not interested in doing fluff. I'm not interested in doing entertainment. We are about enrichment, we are about sensitizing our audience to the message that we have by doing great art music. I think that has to be a girder of what the Lutheran liberal arts tradition has to be about,

¹³⁵ René Clausen, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 14, 2014, transcript.

is pursuit of excellence through the best, the very best of choral literature and keeping that alive.¹³⁶

Although the author has never heard anything short of great diction with a ‘Clausen choir’, a comparison can be made to F. Melius Christiansen, who emphasized the beauty of the music tone, albeit sometimes at the expense of inferior consonants and diction. However, Clausen emphasizes the importance of text to elicit the composer’s intent and reveal the fundamental beauty of the music at hand.

2.7.3. CLAUSEN’S CHORAL CONCEPT

Clausen was heavily influenced by his experiences at St. Olaf College with the St. Olaf Choir. This influence created an affinity for Clausen to sing with a beautiful lyricism, connecting all the registers of the voice in a free, relaxed manner, with emphasis on an expanded use of the light-mechanism of the voice. As a conductor, Clausen believes that the music must be not only learned, but thoroughly and deeply understood before working with the choir on the piece. Therefore, this intimate knowledge of the music must be transferred to the singers so they can effectively engage in the music being performed, in order to transfer the sensitive treatment of musical knowledge

¹³⁶ Ibid.

they have prepared to the ears of the audience. Perfection of pitch is of utmost importance. Less must be more with a choir under the leadership of Clausen. If the choir members over-sing, the overtones of the voice suffer, causing the music to fall slightly out of tune.

Clausen believes that there must be equilibrium of emotion and technique. When a choir gets too emotional, the technical aspects of the music can suffer, as did the occasional choirs of F. Melius Christiansen. “When you start to get too influenced by (emotion) or (technique), that’s when you start to run into the lack of judgment of critical thinking skills, of critical evaluative skills.”¹³⁷ There must be a balance. As a choir, there must be the element of being “about the music”. The product to the audience is music, therefore, a major responsibility of the choir and conductor is sensitivity to technique, the overall message of the music and the composer’s intent.

Clausen emphasizes warmth of color and tone in his choirs. He stresses that there must be a natural beauty, and ease of choral tone, traits picked up from Jennings. These traits need to be flawless and effortless – from the quietest singing to the fullest dynamics. “The beauty of choral tone is in the suppleness of it, the visceralness [sic] of feeling the Concordia Choir

¹³⁷ Ibid.

sound, is hopefully a fundamental characteristic of my choir, that you feel innate beauty of the sound.”¹³⁸

The tone in a Clausen choir, however, must be agile and flexible. Clausen believes that the tone must adhere to the choral piece being sung. The choir must be authentic to the composer’s intent. “I’m just dancing with Bach, and getting into (the singer’s) minds. And then we’ll change totally when I’m doing my “Agnus Dei” or when we’re doing the “Aurora”...but my choir also will not sound the same on Guerrero as it does on Brahms. It will not sound the same on Whitacre as it does on Bach. The same choir will have different tonal characteristics depending on the sound of the music that we’re performing, and I try to stay out of imposing anything on top of that, but only imagining and trying to inform them in an intellectual way, what were the composer’s expectations.”¹³⁹

Diction and vowel formation is also an important concept of the Concordia Choir under René Clausen. The formation of the vowel is what contributes most to blend and beauty of sound. Without a matching vowel, shaped to allow warmth of tone and resonance of the overtone series, the blend will not “sync”, causing for an inferior sound. Clausen bases his vowels off of the /u/ as the default vowel. “The /a/ vowel is really born from the /u/

¹³⁸ Ibid.

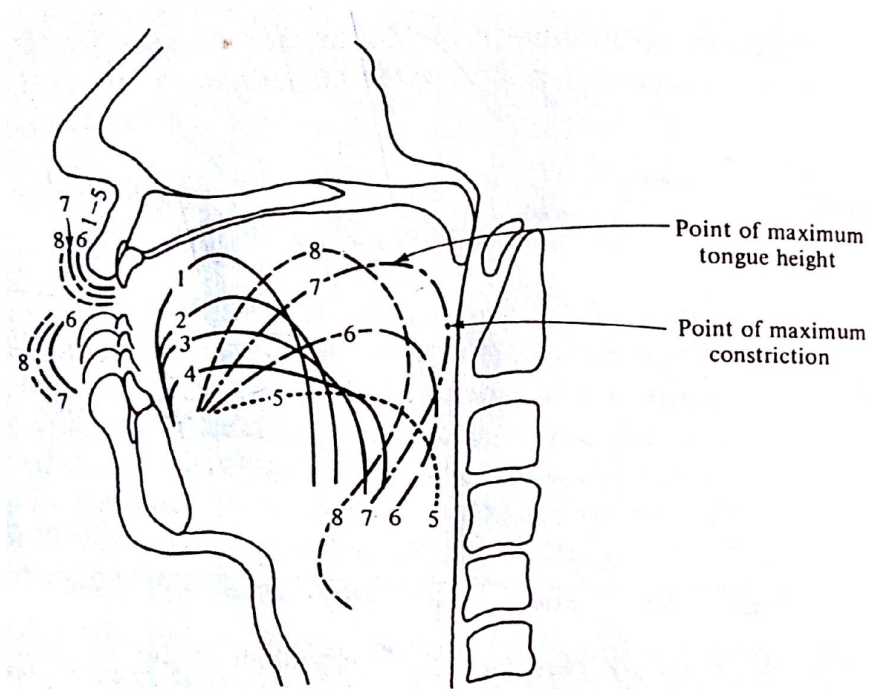
¹³⁹ Ibid.

shape and color, and that helps give a very rich quality to the sound.”¹⁴⁰ Any and all vowels must have the /u/ shape present in the pharynxes. This allows for the soft palate to sustain itself in an elevated position, while allowing a roundness of tone due to the opened nasopharynx, nasal cavity, oropharynx, and laryngopharynx. The shape of a /u/ vowel also allows for ample space both in front of the tongue and behind the tongue. This is due to the proper tongue placement on a /u/ vowel. (See Figure 15) When the choir is singing an /i/ vowel, the tongue must be placed in the proper position for an /i/ to be produced correctly. However, the spacing characteristics that are required to create a /u/ sound must also be somewhat prevalent in the vowel formation. This includes the raised soft palate and openness of the pharynxes. When the vowel in this manner is achieved correctly, a rich, full sound is acquired, allowing for the overtone series to permeate, creating a tone able to blend with section members, and throughout the choir.

Proper diction in relation to consonants is also of high importance. The consonants not only provide clarity of rhythm in the choir, but also underscore the expressive quality of the music. To do this, Clausen would spend considerable time on voiced consonants, especially /m/, /n/, and /v/. These consonants aid in the production of a full, rich sound within the vowel. Proper phonation of the consonants listed above provides a sensation of

¹⁴⁰ Michael Culloton, email message to author, November 8, 2014.

openness of the nasal cavity and pharynx. This, in turn, allows the vowel to resonate in the expanded nasopharynx more freely, allowing for a richer sound with a stronger structure of overtones. Unvoiced consonants also have their place in the choir. For example, the consonant /f/ also aids in the opening and relaxing of the nasopharynx, allowing for a similar function. Consonants must be clear and precise in order to allow the voice to effectively spring into the vowel. Earlier in this study it was noted that in the choral concept of Weston Noble, dots and rests must act as “springboards” to allow the music to dance. However, this is also true in beginning consonants. Beginning consonants, especially unvoiced labial, fricative, and sibilant consonants (however, all consonants apply) allow the voice to be catapulted into the vowel. A clear, precise, quick execution of beginning consonants, all while taking into account to base the voice on the /u/ vowel, will create ample space, allowing for a model vowel sound.



- | | |
|---------|---------|
| (1) [i] | (5) [a] |
| (2) [e] | (6) [ɔ] |
| (3) [ɛ] | (7) [o] |
| (4) [æ] | (8) [u] |

Figure 15. Placement of tongue and lips in the production of major vowels of the singing voice.¹⁴¹

Voice placement and seating arrangements are typical of the Lutheran Choral Tradition fashion: basses behind the sopranos, tenors behind the altos, altos in front to the right of the conductor, sopranos to the left front. The ‘flute’ type colors, that is, those with more roundness to their voices, were often placed on the outside edges of the choir, with the ‘reed’ type colors,

¹⁴¹ Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Books, 1986), 52.

those with a more pure, possibly bright sound, toward the center, with the ‘mixed’ types in the middle of the section. “I seat the choir according to what I call pools of color. And so what my idea is that...the warmth of the sound...is a warmth of color and tone, of a natural beauty and ease of choral production that ranges from the very softest to the very fullest dynamics...The beauty of choral tone is in the suppleness of it, the visceralness [sic] of feeling the Concordia Choir sound, is hopefully a fundamental characteristic of my choir, that you feel innate beauty of the sound.”¹⁴²

This formation, however, is not immutable, and changes from time to time, depending on the demands of the music, the type of tone required of the choir, and general demands of the ensemble. For example, in Concordia Choir’s 2014 tour program, a set of music for double-choir (and triple-choir) was presented to audiences. To achieve ideal sound, blend, and balance, Clausen separated the choir into three groups, to adhere to the triple choir formation of one of the pieces.

Overall, René Clausen’s choral concept can be characterized as the closest to the ideals of the conceived Lutheran Choral Tradition. He emphasizes a richness of tone throughout the entire range of the voice, generally more full than the sound of the other choirs discussed in this study. Clausen emphasizes beauty of tone by structuring the placement of his singers

¹⁴² Clausen, Interview.

in accordance to his “pools of color” that he strives for. The vowels are often based on the principles of the /u/ vowel, allowing for the voice to be full, rich, and with vitality. Consonants support the vowels, give a rhythmic sense to the music, and catapult the voice into the vowels. The sound is characteristically warm and full of energy and tone. These concepts give the framework of one of the most complete choral sounds in today’s choral world.

2.8. TRANSITION AT LUTHER COLLEGE: CRAIG ARNOLD ALLEN HIGHTOWER

2.8.1. *CRAIG ARNOLD*

In 2005, Weston Noble retired from Luther College and the Nordic Choir, after 57 years of choral beauty. This left the college with a major task; not only finding a suitable replacement, but finding a replacement who would take the choir on their wings and soar on; a person with great technical prowess, and with matching charisma. The college found that and more with Dr. Craig Arnold.

Craig Arnold graduated from St. Olaf College, having studied under Kenneth Jennings. He went on to do his graduate studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, completing his doctorate studies at the Eastman School of Music. Having been brought up in the Lutheran Choral Tradition at St. Olaf College, and continuing the trend of great conductors studying at the University of Illinois, Arnold was a “match made in heaven” for the Nordic Choir.

In his five years at the helm of the Nordic Choir, Arnold established himself prominently with the college. The students adored him, he produced results, and he took the choir to a new level. Under Arnold, the choir released

its first CD *The Road Home*, and a tonal beauty was further elicited from the members of the choir. Arnold's musical ear preferred a slightly darker tone in the female voices than Noble; however, a tone that was still brilliant and floating. The sopranos sang with substance and connection, consistent with the St. Olaf Tradition, and with a purity of tone that was released and free. In the opinion of the author, the sopranos under Arnold had a sound that was more flute-like in nature. The placement required further opening of the nasopharynx, a sense of "ballooning" the sinuses open, and "leaning" the voice into the sinuses, while still connecting throughout the vocal apparatus and supporting firmly with the intercostals and abdominal muscles. Altos had a consistency in sound throughout the range. A little weightier than Noble, but not heavy or dragging the tempo. This, like the sopranos, was also produced by a sense of expansion in the head, consistent with Jennings' teachings of a head-down approach. Tenors had a lyric, heady quality, albeit with some ping. Basses provided a firm foundation for the other sections to build the choral structure, and focus on the precision and intricacies of intonation.

Overall, with Arnold, the choir had a tone consistent with the teachings of Jennings, and that is currently seen in St. Olaf Choir and Concordia Choir. In terms of fullness of tone, Arnold's Nordic Choir would be placed in the middle of the other two choirs, respectively, leaning more toward the sound of Concordia. Arnold's sound has had more fullness and girth than St. Olaf

Choir under Armstrong. Arnold allowed the singers to have a sense of vitality and vibrancy. A controlled, but relaxed vibrato could be more consistently heard in the Nordic Choir than in St. Olaf Choir and Concordia Choir. The upper range of the soprano sound tended to come in a more “straight tone” quality, consistent with the sound of the other “Power 3” choirs.

Although only at Luther College for five years, Craig Arnold accomplished what many thought would be an almost impossible task – successfully replacing a legacy in the choral field, but he tackled the opportunity and thrived, taking the choir to new heights. Arnold’s installation of the ideals of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, as he heard in his ear, provided a path for the next, and current conductor, Allen Hightower, to push the boundaries of the choir, and further instill the message of the music to the highest levels of artistry.

2.8.2 ALLEN HIGHTOWER

Following Arnold’s departure from Luther College, the search for a new leader of the Nordic Choir was immediately underway. The college profiled Allen Hightower, who was then the Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas.

Hightower auditioned, made an immediate connection with the students, and was hired, starting in the fall semester of 2010.

Hightower's appointment to Luther College has brought something new to the "Power 3" schools: an outsider to the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Unlike other conductors of the "Power 3" schools, Hightower did not study in a Lutheran Choral Tradition school. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Sam Houston State University, his master's degree from the Eastman School of Music, a Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting from Baylor University, and a Doctorate degree in Conducting from UCLA. Due to Hightower being a man of faith, the college felt he was a wonderful fit to the mission of the choir to make great music at the highest levels of artistry, while paying heed to the message being delivered. "Part of my journey with (Nordic Choir) is finding a balance of being that person who pushes them really hard musically, like you might find at any conservatory or big state university. To also have a kind of pastoral side of what we're about, an unintrusive [sic] one, I hope, but one that's sensitive to their own life situation, that wants to know that on an appropriate personal level that is interested in their overall growth as human beings."¹⁴³ This philosophy is one that Luther College thrives on, and particularly for its students - being able to deliver the message of God, consistent with the mission of the college, but at the same time being a mentor

¹⁴³ Allen Hightower, interview by Ryan Goessl, February 13, 2014.

willing to guide and cater to the individual life needs of the wide array of students and backgrounds on the liberal arts campus.

Hightower has a sound that is largely influenced by the English choral tradition and by the teachings of Paul Salamunovich. Therefore, the tone of the choir is brighter and more direct than Hightower's two predecessors. This is due to Hightower's self-professed obsession for intonation. "I'm a bit obsessed with intonation and a lot of the English choral tradition and so, sort of balanced with what I had in my inner ear...I think (Nordic Choir's sound) certainly has moved in a certain direction, as I work for clarity, as I work for intonation, as I work for diction."¹⁴⁴

Hightower's sopranos sing with a controlled brightness to their sound. The intonation of the sopranos must be perfectly aligned, with a sense of inner vitality, but without pressing. The voice is built off of an /O/ vowel, and is more direct than in other Lutheran Tradition schools. The sensation is almost that of a violin section in an orchestra, a rich, pure, resonant tone. In regards to his altos, they have a fullness to their sound, consistent with Arnold's, though it leans a little on the lighter side. However, at times, the alto's have a light, boy-like sound, which is a trait from Paul Salamunovich. The tenors with Hightower have a more lyrical and rounded quality to them. The resulting sound is less ping to the sound, but still brightness, consistent with

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

the Anglican tradition of which Hightower is influenced. The basses again provide a full foundation for the choir; however the voice is not as heavy as with other choirs. Another Salamunovich trait is the floating sound of the basses. Rather than pressing on the notes where they are, Salamunovich always stressed the bass singer to imagine the note an octave higher than it is, and float it accordingly. This allows for a firm structure that allows the choir to more effectively move the phrase forward. This concept is also very consistent with Weston Noble's four rules of choral singing, as discussed in Chapter 2.4.4 of this study. However, the men in general are more robust in nature than in Salamunovich's and English choirs.

Overall, Hightower brings a lovely new dynamic to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, branching Nordic Choir out from the traditional sound apparent so long within the tradition. Hightower has introduced a more vertical sound, based on the traditions of English choral singing, infused with the concepts learned from Salamunovich, Donald Neuen at UCLA, and his own artistic sense. Being an intensely spiritual person, Hightower also brings a sense of dedication to the word of God to the music presented by Nordic Choir. Hightower expertly bridges the gap between word and music, allowing for the total splendor to be apparent. Hightower's choir is a sound of precision, with spirituality and emotion - a choir of fervor.

CHAPTER III.

THE LUTHERAN CHORAL TRADITION PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

3.1. THE CONDUCTORS

The choirs of the “Power 3” Lutheran Choral Tradition colleges have been, and are blessed in that the conductors leading them have always been stewards of the music. The formation of the St. Olaf Choir and subsequently the Lutheran Choral Tradition was the first instance of the “a cappella” choral movement in the United States. From the pioneers in the field to the conductors of present day, there have been many common traits. One of the many important traits is that the conductors are to be exceedingly intelligent musically and have fine leadership qualities. The great Howard Swan put it succinctly, stating “The great American choruses are directed by men and women who possess the intelligence, industry, and skill to select and apply techniques with satisfying results for each conductor.”¹⁴⁵

Successful conductors have a specific sound that they aspire to in their musical ear. Conductors know how to effectively shape and mold his/her

¹⁴⁵ Swan, 7.

choirs to adhere to the sound ideal that they desire. They are knowledgeable in regards to vocal technique and voice production. Furthermore, conductors must possess a knowledge and understanding of sound acoustics. They must understand how the voice works from a physics point of view, including, but not limited to: formants in the voice, frequency and its effect on pitch, the effects of proper phonation of vowels, their placement, and the effect of the placement of acoustic resonance, an understanding of acoustics as to how they apply to the performance space, and how to maximize sound with minimal effort. Even if formal study into acoustics is not obtained, successful conductors in the Lutheran Choral Tradition have passively learned sound acoustics through experience with their own choirs, and through experimentation.

By understanding vocal technique and sound acoustics, conductors can effectively elicit the sound in their musical ear that they are trying to emulate. This will allow for the choir to efficiently create the sound, produce the proper tonal coloring, and engage in the music in a resourceful manner. For example, the professional soprano opera singer sings with a fundamental frequency ranging from 250 to 1,500 Hz. This intensity of singing contains multiples of the fundamental frequency (harmonics). The effective use of adjusting the vowel to provide an optimal environment for the harmonics to resonate, coupled with resonance tuning, allows the singer to convey an intense, supported sound with minimal effort, thus utilizing the voice in a manner that

is effective for conveying the optimal sound in a composition by the choir. By understanding this, and conveying this passively with the choir, conductors are able to focus their energies and efforts to the subjective qualities of the voice and of the choir.

One of the most important subjective qualities of the conductor is to be a servant of the music. The leaders from the beginning of this tradition have always been subservient to the music and the message that music professes. F. Melius Christiansen once said, “I am the servant of the musical spirit – the spirit of the composer – the spirit of the music which has become my vehicle upon which I ride to an ideal world.”¹⁴⁶

Conductors must be an anvil, not a hammer. Conductors must be led by the music of the choir, the energy of the choir, the message of the choir, nurture the sound, and in respect, the singers, and allow the music to speak through themselves. However, unlike the anvil, conductors must not be hardened. They must allow that sound to be absorbed. Vulnerability is a virtue of successful conductors, not just of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, but in the whole of the choral art. Conductors who do not allow their feelings to play a part in the creation of art are cheating their students and audiences. Leonard Bernstein stated that “The conductor who lets the music lead him is a true interpreter. Empty motions are of no avail.”¹⁴⁷ In order to elicit true

¹⁴⁶ F. Melius Christiansen, “Inspirational Leadership,” *Choral News*, 1947.

¹⁴⁷ F. Melius Christiansen, “To Choir Directors,” *Lutheran Herald* XXIII (January 3, 1939), 31.

emotional beauty of the text being sung, conductors must instill true feelings within the music, otherwise the music will remain opaque and artificial. The audience will be able to pick up on this. Just like a great actor in a blockbuster movie, the choir and singers must lift the listener to a new world, a special world, and allow the audience, even if for a brief moment, to suspend reality, basking in the innate beauty intended by the composer and lyricist. One of the best quotes in regards to the wonder of choral music was stated by the great Howard Swan: “Any great work of art is great because it creates a special world of its own. It revives and readapts time and space, and the measure of its success is the extent to which it invites you in and lets you breathe its strange, special air.”¹⁴⁸

In order to be vulnerable as a conductor, conductors must examine and evaluate themselves. Conductors must freely admit who they are as a person, good and bad, and explore the ultimate reasons for who they are. Howard Swan often spoke on this concept. Whenever the choir sang wonderfully or meaningfully, whether musical beauty was obtained, or a major hurdle was crossed, he would speak to the tune of “This is who I am. Let me share this beautiful moment with you!”¹⁴⁹ To be vulnerable is not only to evaluate one’s self, but rather, to evaluate and share the moments that express this release of inhibition. To understand one’s self on an intimate level, and to allow others

¹⁴⁸ Noble, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Noble, 21.

access to truly know and understand a person at this personal level is the true definition of vulnerability and its importance in the choral field. Only when the depths of the individual can be freed from suppression can the true beauty of music be brought forth from the conductor.

By allowing honesty and vulnerability of one's own self, conductors can focus on being a window conductor. "If you look at window conductors, they're translucent. You tend not to see them because the light goes through them. They're only there to translate. And all of a sudden you're hearing music. You're not looking at the conductor – all you know is that you're wrapped up in the music that you're hearing. And you don't even notice there's a conductor there."¹⁵⁰ In the Lutheran Choral Tradition, as stated earlier, the conductors are servants of the music. By coordinating the vulnerability, knowledge, emotion, and musical message of the conductor, the choir will shine. The choir must be the one that shines, not the conductor. The purpose of the conductor is to lead the choir to THEIR musical excellence. Conductors who "put on a show" are never at the top of their game. Too often conductors worry about the beauty of their gesture, creating a majestic sweeping dance with their arms. This takes away from the audience experience. They will then be focused on the conductor, rather than putting all of their auditory, cognitive and aesthetic energies into the choir and its

¹⁵⁰ Clausen, interview.

cohesive sounds being produced. These hammer conductors are rarely effective conductors. They must allow themselves to become absorbable anvils. The purpose of conductors is to allow for the musical beauty to thrive. The effective and successful conductors may not have beauty in their conducting gesture (or they may), but one thing that all conductors have in their tactus is precision, expressivity, and clarity. The clear and concise conductors will have the choirs at their whim, allowing them to successfully extract the intricacies of choral beauty.

Conductors must also be willing to submit themselves to the needs of the choir. The conductors must be willing to know everyone in the ensemble and have a connection with them. They must care for their choir members as individuals. The choir conductor who doesn't connect with the choir will not be able to elicit the intimacies of beautiful, emotional choral music. They will not be vulnerable, and they will not be able to truly relate to, and with the choir. Unlike instrumental music, choral music must convey physical emotion to affect the sound. To an extent, an orchestra can achieve this, but due to the nature of the instrument, the emotional effect is limited. Being able to incorporate physical human emotion, coupled with the conviction to the meaning of the text into the vocal instrument, sets choirs apart from all other components of the arts. Choral music is able to connect to the listener on an intimate, raw, naked level, reaching the depths of the soul. If a conductor

cannot reach these depths with their choir members, the choir, in turn, will not be able to reach these depths with their audiences.

Finally, the conductors must be mentors and guides for the choir. In the Lutheran Choral Tradition this would also refer to the conductor having a pastor-like quality. To reiterate an earlier quote by Allen Hightower, “(The conductor must) also have a pastoral side of what we’re about, an unintrusive [sic] one, I hope, but one that’s sensitive to their own life situation, that wants to know that on an appropriate personal level that is interested in their overall growth as human beings.”¹⁵¹ The ability to lead is coupled with the ability to nurture, the ability to guide, the ability to teach. The choir will follow the conductor who truly touches their hearts and cares for them immensely. This concept cannot be emphasized enough. Conductors MUST be nurturers, mentors, advisors, and at times, counselors. Choral music is an emotional art form. It can leave a person exposed, and just like a young child looking to their parents for guidance through the difficulties and questions of life, without an effective leader to move the choir forward, the music will never reach its full potential.

3.2. THE CHOIR MEMBERS/MUSICIANS AND MUSIC

¹⁵¹ Hightower, interview.

3.2.1. THE EMOTIONAL AND VULNERABLE CHOIR

I find it very fascinating that one person or a group of people can get together as a choir and come up with a song that ends up inspiring people to create emotions, love and togetherness. Communication, which comes from this idea that sparks off of humanity and becomes something that is cherished and loved by the people, is very fascinating to me.

- Damian Marley

The choir is the mainstay with choral music. As obvious as it may sound, too often do conductors, administrators, clergy, audience members, take this for granted. Without the choir, there would be no art. The conductors do not sing, the audiences do not sing, the clergy, although often singing, usually are subpar, and the administrators do not sing in the concerts. Only with a choir can the choral art take its form. This must never be forgotten, and always be of the prime importance when preparing choral music, a choir, and a performance program. **WITHOUT THE CHOIR, THERE WOULD BE NO CHORAL ART.**

The task, therefore, is to create an environment that transcends human emotions. The choir is this environment, and it must be nurtured. An

effective choir is one that can connect, not only with the audience, but with each other; a choir that creates a symbiosis between all members; a choir that creates a bond with each other, will vouch for each other, and will give of themselves to each other for the betterment of each other and of the art. A contributor to the American Choral Directors Association website, *ChoralNet*, stated it so elegantly when she said, “We create beauty in the world, bring joy to audiences, uplift our (and their) spirits, improve our vocal skills, create a unified group effort toward a common goal, interpret the ideas of great creative musical minds together...communicate our own humanity...take responsibility for our contribution, assist others, learn self-discipline in a group setting. Beyond all of that, we respect ourselves and each other, our director, and our audience, all at once.”¹⁵² What a wonderful way to explain the effects and needs of the collaborative efforts of every member of a choir. Connection, transparency, and vulnerability are of utmost importance. “To be part of a group like the St. Olaf Choir, to be part of group like Concordia Choir, Nordic Choir, Gustavus Choir, whatever, you have to have a servant’s heart. You have to be willing to use your gifts in service to others.”¹⁵³

The choirs adhering to the Lutheran Choral Tradition must adhere to the above statements, and the choir members must be willing to sacrifice

¹⁵² Flora Metrick, conversation on “Explaining the importance of choir” by Carl J. Ferrara, *ChoralNet*, April 24, 2008, 9:47 a.m., April 24, 2008, <http://www.choralnet.org/view/219199#219200>.

¹⁵³ Armstrong, interview.

themselves to the greater need of the choir. “I want to be in that choir to be a part of that choir. The total – I will be willing and we still have students who are willing to know what it means to sacrifice for the ideals of the choir. To come in and rehearse an hour and a half a day...that is what I mean by part of the feature of (the Lutheran Choral Tradition choirs) being the willingness to dedicate to the discipline of what it takes to become a crack choir.”¹⁵⁴

Dedicating themselves to the schedule demands of the choir, but also dedicating themselves to each other and the beauty of the music, is the most important aspect of being a member of a successful choir in the Lutheran Choral Tradition. By adhering to these guidelines, the choir will dedicate themselves and become stewards of the music, and what it represents. The message of the composer can more thoroughly be brought out in an effective, spiritual manner, providing passion and emotion inherent in compositions of high-quality. In an anonymous letter to Noble, following a Dorian invitational performance, a student wrote:

During my week at Luther (College), I experienced a **wonderful**¹⁵⁵ sensation whenever the choir broke into song! The whole room seemed to burst forth with emotion! What a change from our high school choir! I have never considered myself to have amazing vocal talent, but even so at the Grand Concert I put my heart into all of the songs that were performed! Your choir room is an experience I’ll never forget! And I am positive I’ll

¹⁵⁴ René Clausen, interview.

¹⁵⁵ Author’s emph.

always remember the words and the emotions for all of my Dorian songs!¹⁵⁶

Vulnerability, as stated earlier in 3.1. *The Conductor*, is also of vital importance for each singer within the choir. The choir must sensitize the music, feel its emotion, bask in the internal beauty prevalent in the music, and become one with the music and its message in order to properly and effectively present what is being sung in a manner that does justice to the music. One common way to work with the choir on the issue of vulnerability is by the use of retreats, tours, and regular outings with the choir. Allowing the choir members more opportunities for fellowship with each other allows the members to further cement their friendships with each other, which in turn allows the sung notes to “lift off the page” and become music. By the choir members allowing themselves to be vulnerable as a whole, the choir allows each other and the audience to see their true, exposed selves. This allows the music to have a personal devoted meaning; a meaning that the audience will relate and be receptive to, will appreciate, and by which will be further enriched. Choral vulnerability allows the choir and audience a personal connection with each other, and for their brief time together, the choir and audience are searching for a higher cause - feeding their spirit. The choir must

¹⁵⁶ Noble, 13.

remember three rules, as noted by Dr. Diana Allan¹⁵⁷, with comments on the rules by the author:

1. Vulnerability is not weakness.

By allowing one's self to be vulnerable, members of the choir can relate to the music, associate the music with personal experiences, and emphasize a personal, spiritual connection to the music. Being exposed and "raw" should not be a crutch, but rather a stepping stone for beauty.

2. We need to understand the relationship between vulnerability and courage.

Being vulnerable builds up the courage of the musician, and propagates an atmosphere conducive to taking risks. This may allow for the musician to be more prone to make a mistake, or missing the point that they were trying to convey, but audiences and listeners of great choral music want a personal touch and connection to the music. A good musician plays flawlessly technically. A great musician

¹⁵⁷ Diana Allan, "Daring Greatly – The Vulnerable Performer," *Peak Performance for Musicians* (2013), September 24, 2013, accessed November 18, 2014, <http://www.musicpeakperformance.com/daring-greatly-the-vulnerable-performer/>.

plays flawlessly technically along with giving the extra dimension of a personal, emotional touch to the music.

3. Risk failing TODAY!

The choir that gives their all emotionally, spiritually, musically, and technically daily in rehearsal and performance is the choir that everyone strives to be and to hear. Choral music is about transcendence into a world that can only be created by the way of music. Music gives an extra dimension to words that cannot be dictated to the best of their ability by speech alone. By risking, and possibly failing occasionally in rehearsal, the choir will allow their souls to be exposed, connecting to their innermost being to create emotional music. The choir members will also appreciate each other for their sincere attempts at choral beauty.

3.2.2. THE TECHNICAL CHOIR

Although emotion is of extreme importance in the performance of choral music, technical ability is also of equal importance. When a choir leans too much to one direction of the Emotional/Technical spectrum, the other suffers, and gives an injustice to the choir and the audience. “When you start

to get too influenced by one or the other (technique and emotion) that's when you start to run into the lack of judgment of critical thinking skills, of critical evaluative skills. And we all run into it and we need to be careful...Most of us aren't willing to be that honest with each other about that...What I do think is critical is that we are constantly evaluating ourselves.”¹⁵⁸ In order to be an elite choir, the choir must sing with precision, authenticity to the text, awareness of vocal technique, proper diction and vowel placement, and awareness of the sound around them, in coordination with the emotive side of music.

The choirs of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition have traditionally come from Scandinavian-American background, particularly of Norwegian background. This comes into account with the sound that is often heard in the choirs of the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Vowels are usually based on a /u/ sound, also /ʊ/ and /ɔ/ sounds. This is due to the sensation of round fullness that is apparent in the oropharynx and laryngopharynx in the production of the /u/ vowel, and also /ʊ/ and /ɔ/ sounds when singing in the upper ranges of the voice or creating a sense of fullness. The tongue on a /u/ vowel arches with the tip of the tongue just behind the lower teeth, and the apex near the palate, where the soft and hard palates join together, curving back down into the throat into a question mark-like position. The /ʊ/ and /ɔ/ vowels drop the

¹⁵⁸ Clausen, interview.

jaw, but do not allow the voice to be horizontal, which often leads to a pressing of the sound, rather than a relaxed, floated sound. (See Figure 15 in section 2.7.3.) By the arching of the tongue in the /u/, the pharynges need to create more space for the vowel to be produced and resonate. This added space in the pharynges, and particularly in the posterior oropharynx give the sound a full, rich quality to the tone. Due to the increased space created, a more favorable resonance is heard, which in turn allows for the upper harmonics of the fundamental frequency being sung to be present in the tone. (See Fig. 16). The optimization of the harmonics of tone gives more substance to the voice, allowing for the harmonics to be heard. As the voice is complex, the harmonics emphasize pitches above the note sung, known as the fundamental frequency, giving the voice brilliancy. (See Fig. 17)

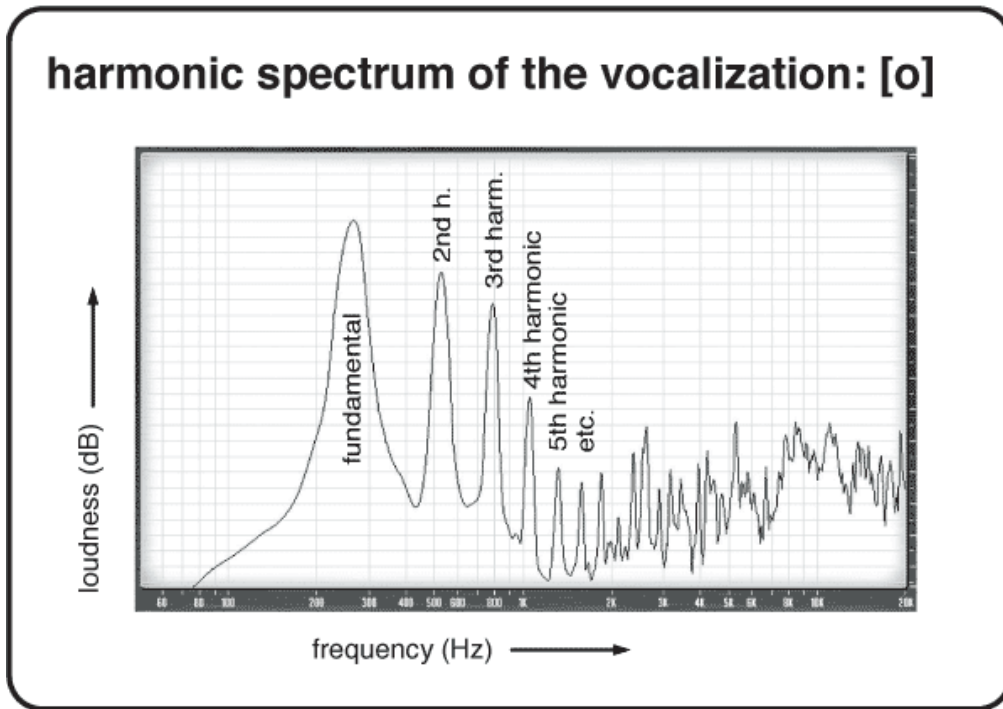
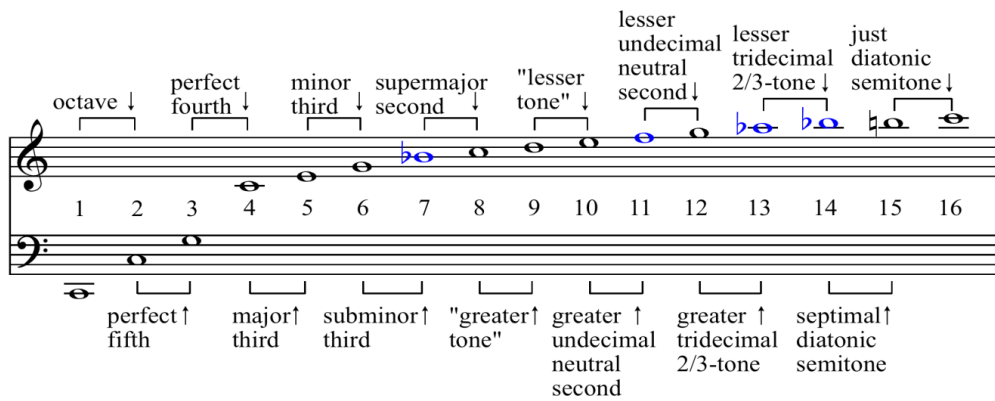


Fig. 16. The harmonic spectrum of a sung /o/ vowel at approximately G#3.¹⁵⁹



¹⁵⁹ "Etude 2: Harmonics," *For the Contemporary Flutist Online*, accessed November 2, 2014. <http://www.forthecontemporaryflutist.com/etude/etude-02.html>

Fig. 17. The harmonic series from the fundamental frequency (f1) through the 16th harmonic (f16).

Allowing ample space in the pharynxes is often preferable to the choirs of the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Ample space allows the choirs to sing with a brilliance of tone while employing great vocal control and support, but not overexerting themselves. As stated earlier in this study, René Clausen often states, “Never sing louder than beautiful.” This allows the choir to emit a tone that is full and brilliant without tension. It allows the choir to sing as a cohesive unit rather than a collective group of soloists singing together, providing for further emphasis on the other technical characteristics of the choir.

Choirs of the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition also sing with precision. A precise choir brings out the intensity and crispness of the text, further emphasizing and catapulting the voice into the vowels being sung. This is a result of the influence of Robert Shaw to the choral world. Shaw taught that the key to choral blend and uniformity was rhythm. If the choir cannot arrive at a vowel at the same time, then blend is impossible.¹⁶⁰

Shaw emphasized count-singing with his choirs and in his teaching. He would ask the choir to sing their respective vocal lines using subdivided

¹⁶⁰ Noble, 49.

numbers (1-ee-and-a), 1-and-2-and). This would allow for the choir to arrive at the pitch at precisely the correct time. This also allows for the singers to internalize the subdivided beat, which in turn gives the vocal line vivacity and energy.

Other conductors, particularly those in the Lutheran Choral Tradition, have further championed Shaw's concept of rhythm, adding their own interpretations. Weston Noble employed his day-tay-day concept, as discussed in 2.4. of this study. This provided a "springboard" in the notes, allowing the consonant to effectively energize, or catapult into the vowel. This moves the music along, giving it a dance-like quality to music. One of Weston Noble's most famous quotes is "All music must dance." Rarely would a rehearsal pass where this was not mentioned. It allows for the music to continually flow, just like a river, allowing for a give and take relationship which will connect other aspects of choral singing, such as emotion, technique, lyric singing, and tone production. Anton Armstrong adheres with this concept, but also incorporates shadow vowels at the ends of phrases to further emphasize the release and entrance. This not only allows for a precise, crisp ending to a phrase, but also caters to the choirs being able to effectively sing with energy and vitality throughout the phrase. René Clausen likewise emphasizes rhythm and incorporates the use of alight shadow vowel in the Concordia Choir. The choir is precise with their consonants and quick to form

their vowels in a full manner as a result of the energy employed by preceding consonants.

Precision of consonants and vowels allows the choir to sing with authenticity to the language and stylistic period of the text being sung. The choir must be able to pronounce the text being sung like a native speaker, while employing proper vocal technique, which occasionally does not easily complement each other. Not only is it important to pronounce the text being sung correctly, but it is equally important to understand the text, and know what each word means. This correlates with the emotive side of the choir, wherein it will aid to bring out the meaning of the text in a manner that is conducive to the composer's and poet's intent. Furthermore, proper pronunciation of vowels and consonants will provide for a natural "regional" inflection of the music, providing for a higher level of authenticity in the music being sung.

One of the overall most important technical aspects of a choir is the ability to listen. A choir may be flawless in vocal technique, diction, vowel placement and rhythm; however, without a well-developed ear that consistently listens to the idiosyncrasies of each other and the music being performed, the singers and choir as a whole cannot properly adjust to each other, build on each other's tonal center, adjust to the environment in which they are singing, and most importantly, adjust to the emotional and physical

requirements of the music. By having a developed ear and consistently utilizing it, many of the aspects of the conductor's job are more easily completed. The singers passively teach themselves to blend with each other in a section and throughout the choir, to be attentive and sensitive to dynamics and tone color, and to adjust to the many demands of the voice, venue, style of music, and requests of the conductor. Coupled with a firm grasp of vocal technique and breath, coupled with the ability to create a lyrical line from a top-down approach to the voice, the possibilities for the choir are endless.

Emotion and technique are of great importance in music. When given the choice of listening to a choir of average technical prowess and amazing emotion and sense of vulnerability, compared to a technically great choir void of emotion and sensitivity, most will choose the former rather than the latter. However, being able to experience a choir that excels in both technical and emotional aspects, one has hit choral gold. The "Power 3" choirs of the Lutheran Choral Tradition have thrived on exceptionality in both technical and emotional facets of choral music, which has truly allowed them to prosper in the choral world.

3.3. THE MUSIC

The music performed by the choirs of the Lutheran Choral Tradition is one of the most wonderful characteristics of the movement. This not only applies to the composers of the Baroque and Renaissance, especially the music of Bach and the music associated with Lutheran Choral Tradition influence composers, such as F. Melius Christiansen, Olaf Christiansen, Paul J. Christiansen, James Fritschel, Kenneth Jennings, René Clausen, Jean Berger, and the English language implementation of the great Russian composers (ie. Rachmaninov, Chesnokov), but also to the recent expansion of choral music to other regions, including the music of Latin and South America, Africa, African-American Spirituals, music of East Asia, and the music of Europe.

The overall thought and importance of the choral music is its high level of artistry and technical prowess. Music must be challenging to the choir members of the Lutheran Choral Tradition choirs. “The Lutheran liberal arts tradition (is about the) pursuit of excellence through the best, the very best of choral literature and keeping that alive. Now that means technically doing literature that’s going to demand from your choir. That’s going to place musical, vocal, technical in every way, demands upon your choir.”¹⁶¹ The music must demand the very best musically out of every choir member, and the choir must strive for nothing less than perfection in order to build upon the musical abilities of every singer, while adhering to the mission of the choir

¹⁶¹ Clausen, interview.

and college. Along with the technical and artistic value of the music, it must also glorify and further the word of God. “The missional aspect of the choir is probably a unique attribute, unique to the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Understanding [sic] that we sort of bridge the gap between the liturgical and the academic, because we try to bring depth to the academic understanding at the same time, the fervor of the faith.”¹⁶²

Although there is a similarity in the programming of the “Power 3” schools, they are branching out in the current day. A typical program is organized into three or four sets, with each set often having a theme, whether it be labeled or not. They are well thought out, and mostly serve the purpose of furthering the Christian message and message of the set theme. However, in recent years, a consistency with all “Power 3” schools, incorporation of secular and world music of a high artistic and technical quality has been regularly programmed into the concert program.¹⁶³

The concert program will usually contain a composition by one of the three Christiansens, with F. Melius Christiansen’s compositions being the most common. They will almost always include a set of music traditional to the choral field from the Baroque and/or Renaissance Periods, and occasionally the Classical Period, such as Bach, Victoria, Palestrina, Schütz,

¹⁶² Hightower, interview.

¹⁶³ See Appendix C for the 2014 concert programs of the “Power 3” schools.

and Brahms. Following the traditional set of music will usually be a more serious set that may include the music to the likes and stylings of Whitacre or Lauridsen, or it will be a set of music traditional to the American Lutheran Choral Tradition movement, such as the music of Jennings, the Christiansens', Clausen, or Fritschel, for example. This set may also include a technically complex piece, completely different from any other music programmed, that will be the most demanding to the choir. This could be a new choral composition or something that has been established, and will often contain elements of poly/bi/atonality. This will be usually followed by the final set, which would contain world music, spirituals, entertaining music of a high artistic and technical value, and traditional music. Ending the concert will always be a traditional song, sung at every concert. Since the Olaf and Paul J. Christiansen days, this piece has been F. Melius Christiansen's "Beautiful Savior" for the Concordia and St. Olaf Choirs. For Luther College Nordic Choir, this piece has been "O Lord God" by Chesnekov, and in 1990, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" was added to this list.

Overall, the music must push the students to their musical limits while providing a high artistic sound and tone giving the composer's intent, and the intent of the text justice. The choir must be open to themselves and each other, be vulnerable, and connect with the music. The conductor, in turn, must be the conduit between the singers and the music, properly leading and

guiding the choir to the highest level of artistry possible, while envisioning the intent of the composer and poet. More than anything, the music must further the tradition of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, with the choir acting as a servant, providing a message of hope, transparency, love, and beauty.

3.4. THE THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE LUTHERAN CHORAL TRADITION

The Lutheran Choral Tradition has thrived because people who value the spiritual connection of the Lutheran tradition, the value of music in the lives of these Lutheran leaders, I think that as long as we have people like that in these jobs it's going to continue to thrive, and that's good news.¹⁶⁴

The Lutheran Choral Tradition is an entity in and of itself. The thought, emotion, preparation, commitment to the text, music, message, and the concepts taught to the students are rivaled by none in the choral world. That being stated, it is imperative to note that the Lutheran Choral Tradition is NOT a technique or a style, rather, is a sentiment of giving, sacrifice, dedication, and willingness to provide to the betterment of the choir, the music, and self. The students are not only taught valuable music concepts, but are also taught about the beauty of life in general. Emphasis is placed on the all-around well-being of each student, consistent with the mission of the

¹⁶⁴ Culloton, interview.

Scandinavian-American Lutheran liberal arts education. This includes not only a well-rounded education, but also a well-rounded education in the musical sense, providing for a high sense of vocal technique, and understanding the relationship between the two. These concepts are invaluable to the development of a complete choral organization.

First and foremost, the singers are all there because of their desire to be a part of something spectacular. Unlike major universities, many of which require singing in the ensembles, from college freshman to doctorate student, many of the students are attending a Lutheran Choral Tradition institution because they want to partake in the choir. Those students come from a variety of backgrounds and majors, but all share their love of singing with each other, and are willing to give what it takes to be part of something special. Coming back to the quote mentioned previously in this study, the Concordia Choir music education student commented on the need for commitment, sacrifice, dedication, and desire. “When I teach, this choir will be my model. There’s a certain dynamic here. A lot of it is discipline that’s needed to create the technical and emotional engagement with the music. There’s a degree of sacrifice that’s needed in order to sing every piece with all the conviction and precision we can muster. The thing is, we’re all willing to make this sacrifice.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Clausen, interview.

The music and singing of the Lutheran Choral Tradition must be grounded in faith. As a college of the church, performing music of the church, the choirs must effectively give justice to the text. This requires extra effort and attention to the emotional and aesthetic side of choral music and performance; vulnerability. As discussed earlier in this study, the singers and conductor must be vulnerable. They must be willing to communicate and connect with each other on an intimate level. They must trust and genuinely care for each other. They must dig deep into their unconscious, good and bad, and allow those feelings to be transparent; on their surface. They must understand that to be vulnerable is not a weakness, but rather, a strength. It allows them to musically relate their innermost emotions, thoughts, and desires, giving a pure, raw, authentic emotional sensation to the listener, and furthermore, to each other. “I remember when I was a student thinking that I am not learning only about music here. I’m learning about being a good human being.”¹⁶⁶

Luther College’s Nordic Choir traditionally holds hands with each other. Literally, the entire choir is connected to each other, singing as one, bringing forth the emotive (and technical) side of the music together collectively. There is no individuality. Everyone works toward a common goal. There is no room for selfishness in the choirs of the Lutheran Choral

¹⁶⁶ Michael Culloton, interview by Ryan Goessl.

Tradition. Rather, an emphasis on relaying the musical ideas and intents of the composer and poet in a way that only music can do, touching the soul and feeding the spirit of all involved, and sharing it with those wanting to receive it. “The Lutheran Choral Tradition is so wrapped up in the spirit of its founding and what continues to steer it today, that’s how I define it – a spiritual existence... Draw out the spirit of your teaching and performing.”¹⁶⁷

Technique and musical ability are of equal importance. The singers of these choirs are not the type of singer you will typically find on the stages of the Metropolitan Opera. Occasionally those singers come through the school, but they are not as regular an occurrence as at major universities and conservatories. Rather, these are singers with above-average voices, well-trained, with a lyrical beauty that is built in to the Scandinavian influenced Lutheran tradition, and an intense desire and ability to create musical beauty out of words. Emphasis has been instilled in bringing the head voice down in order to create a free, unobtrusive lyrical line, paving the way for an art song/lieder type of singing approach. The singers sound more like the style of Dietrich Fischer-Diskau or Elly Ameling than that of René Fleming or Bryn Terfel.¹⁶⁸ This type of singing specifically emphasizes the bringing down of the head voice.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Armstrong, interview.

The beauty of the lyrical line is shared with the audience. Not only does this allow for flawless intonation and blend, but it also speaks volumes to the stereotype of Lutherans being friendly. It is often said that it takes ten minutes for Lutherans to say goodbye to each other. This statement is a testament to the friendliness and willingness to share in fellowship with each other. This is transparent in the music of the Lutheran Choral Tradition, where everyone submits to the needs of the choir to share the gift of music with the listener and with each other. “Lutherans are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony... It’s natural for Lutherans to sing in harmony. Lutherans are the sort of people you could call up when you’re in deep distress. If you’re dying, they’ll comfort you. If you’re lonely, they’ll talk to you. And if you’re hungry, they’ll give you tuna salad!”¹⁶⁹

The Lutheran Choral Tradition is about sharing musical talents with each other and beautiful music with audiences, sharing experiences, musical or not, with each other, sharing life-long friendships, and sharing learning experiences. The conductors of the Lutheran Choral Tradition guide their choirs to reach their full potential with these concepts in mind, building on these concepts and exceptional vocal technique, with authenticity to styles and the music at hand, to create a product that is flawless in all aspects, drawing

¹⁶⁹ Garrison Keillor, “Singing With the Lutherans,” *Fibonacci Series of Oger*, February, 18, 2013, accessed on October 8, 2014, <http://ogersama.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/%E2%80%8Bsinging-with-the-lutherans-by-garrison-keillor/>.

out the deepest emotions. “When the Lutheran Choral Tradition is at its best, it sets out not to entertain. It sets out to transform the performer and the listener. And I think that’s a key element because our art is then in service to others, rather than ‘Come look at me. See how great I am.’ But it’s about how our art can serve others.¹⁷⁰

Practical aspects of the Lutheran Choral Tradition:

1. High level of technical ability
 - a. A top-down approach to singing, bringing a float-like head voice down into the middle and lower ranges of the voice, allowing for pureness of tone.
 - b. The ability to thoroughly support the voice to allow for a lyrical, released, free sound.
 - c. An understanding of vowel placement and diction, and how it applies to the overall choral sound.
2. Focus to the choral sound, which lends itself to a pure, light sound. Leaning toward a straighter tone, but with a relaxed, controlled vibrato
3. Firm sense of the role of every section of the choir

¹⁷⁰ Armstrong, interview.

- a. Basses – provide a foundation, but allow the voice to float and not be heavy. A rich sound that allows the choir to enhance fullness in their sound.
 - b. Tenors – A lyrical, light quality, leaning towards a sound with some ping, but not to the point of being overly bright. A round, forward leaning warm tone in the upper ranges with movement in the phrasing.
 - c. Altos – provide a warmth of tone, connecting the upper and lower register voices. A fullness, yet floating tone that gives comfort, yet is flexible. Almost to the point of being as rich as the basses.
 - d. Sopranos – a light, floating tone, leaning slightly more to a straight tone (yet with some vibrancy) than other sections to allow for proper balancing toward the bass and alto sections. The ability to effortlessly sing through the passaggio.
4. Always movement in the phrase, based not only on technical, but more often, emotional aspects of the music
 - a. The meaning of the music is always paramount, with consideration to the emotional meaning.

Principles and Theoretical Aspects of the Lutheran Choral Tradition:

1. Willingness to put aside one's own musical aspirations for the benefit of the choir
2. Willingness to explore the world of vulnerability
3. Service to the music and message
 - a. Allowing the emotion of the music to shine through the music being sung with a healthy, moving, floating vocal technique
 - b. Relaying the composers' intentions to the audience
 - c. Being a conduit for the music and message. Sharing the music rather than performing it.
4. Advance the mission of the history within the Lutheran Choral Tradition
 - a. Allow the hymnody to continue and thrive.
 - b. Relay the spirituality of the composers.
5. Expression of the text to an audience
 - a. Giving justice to the text and its meaning.
 - b. Authenticity to the languages.
 - c. Focus on how to move the audience in the message of the text, coupled with the high artistic values of great choral music.
6. Exploration of the global view
 - a. Exploring new music and new cultures.

- b. Sharing choral music with other nationalities and cultures.
- c. Touring to share music.

7. Teaching

- a. Leading the choir members to be effective and knowledgeable teachers.
- b. Teaching the value of music on the spirit of all involved.

8. Being a conduit for the music

- a. Allowing the music to take form through the singer. Just like electricity, the singer is just the conductor between the thought and the product entering the ears of the audience. The music passes through the singer freely and with passion.

9. Incorporation of all styles of music

- a. Evaluating the choral sound of the Lutheran Choral Tradition by examining various genres, styles of music and cultures with an inherent passion for music.

10. Examination of faith in music

- a. How is the music affecting a singer's faith?
- b. How is the music driving forward the Christian message, not only to the audience and choir, but to each individual singer?

11. Inclusiveness

- a. Being open to the perception of beauty and emotion choral music provides.
- b. Allowing for the participants to be a community encased in the purpose behind the music being performed.

By and large, the theoretical approach of the Lutheran Choral Tradition is about servitude. The choir, the conductor, and the audience are servants to the choral art. The music is not an opportunity for individual glory, but rather, an opportunity to give justice to the beauty of the art. Music is the voice of God. It accomplishes what words and actions cannot. Music invigorates the soul and feeds the spirit. Music provides a world that is unique, transporting an individual, even if for the briefest of time, to a place of sheer beauty and extravagance. Choral music goes further by providing a textual component to music with human instruments, rather than material instruments. This allows for not only meaning to be articulated, but to incorporate raw emotion into the meaning and inflection, providing an avenue to experience this unique world. Arrival of each other and the listener to this unique world is the mission of the Lutheran Choral Tradition.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Lutheran Choral Tradition has inspired the choral world to sing at a high level of artistic excellence. This pursuit of excellence is credited to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, from the early beginnings with F. Melius' influence on John Finley Williamson with the Westminster Choral College, to today, with the leaders of the tradition being innovators and ambassadors for the music and message.

This study has provided for a detailed look at the inclusive history of the Lutheran Choral Tradition from a purely musical sense, further exploring the philosophy, concepts and explanations for the success of the tradition. Furthermore, this study has provided a collective account for the major influences of the Lutheran Choral Tradition through the current day, and documents the evolution of the choral concepts, sound ideals, musical expression, and emotive concepts inherent in the music tradition. However, these concepts are consistently evolving and changing due to advancements in vocal pedagogy, science, changes in culture, and entrances of new leaders in the tradition. Therefore, the writer of this study suggests that continuing study of the various concepts and evolution of the Lutheran Choral Tradition are consistently taking place.

Further study is recommended also regarding the similarities and differences between the Lutheran Choral Tradition and other traditions based on of the church, specifically the Catholic and Anglican traditions and approaches to singing. With the advancement of technology and world views, the various choral schools are expanding, branching out, and infusing with each other. Therefore, study on this concept is recommended.

Further study is also recommended on the voice teaching of the late James Bailey, a professor of voice at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. James Bailey was the graduate voice teacher of the leaders of the choral tradition in the second half of the 20th century, namely Kenneth Jennings, René Clausen, and Anton Armstrong. All these named leaders have mentioned praises for the teachings of James Bailey, and the effect he has had on their understanding of the voice. The writer believes that his influence and teaching on these conductors provided the framework for the revolutionizing and reconstructing of the Lutheran Choral Tradition from the original style of the Christiansens to the lyrical and expressive style that it is today.

The Lutheran Choral Tradition is an exciting school of choral music. The beauty that is generated by the emotional and technical prowess of the choirs, coupled with the discipline that it takes to be successful and elite are rivaled by none. The emotional side of music, especially the concept of vulnerability, brings a special connection of each singer with each other, and

the message of the music and text, providing for a collective sound that is personal and raw emotionally, with conviction.

The Lutheran Choral Tradition continues to bring joy, beauty, and passion to audiences around the globe. The “Power 3” schools tour yearly, and internationally regularly (usually once every three years), bringing the emotional and technical beauty of exquisite choral singing, rooted in faith and conviction, to audiences around the world. This connection of emotion and technique in the performance and preparation of the choral music gives a sense of beauty that cannot be explained. The author of this paper attributes choral music to the voice of God for its ability to transcend human thought and feeling, providing a special world, even if for the briefest of moments, for all taking part. The choral music takes on a life of its own, bringing joy, comfort, hope, and peace to all that take part.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

A.1. WESTON NOBLE INTERVIEW WITH RYAN GOESSL (FEBRUARY 12, 2014)

Ryan: If you had to define the Lutheran Choral Tradition into words, how would you define it?

Weston: How do you define the Luther choral tradition? First is its uniqueness in that F. Melius (Christiansen), when he went to Leipzig and heard the Leipzig Men and Boys choir, he was so enamored by the beautiful tone of the boy sopranos, its purity and its pitch. So when he returned to St. Olaf (College), he announced to the sopranos that from now on "You're going to sing like boys!" With his Norwegian accent, "You're going to sing like boys"! That is the uniqueness that set them apart.

Ryan: You said this uniqueness set them apart – how would you characterize that?

Weston: Well, they were the only choir in the country that sings with a straight tone.

Ryan: Great. Now, that was the one question that I wanted to ask about general Lutheran Choral Tradition, and most of what I'd like to ask is specifically related to you and your work here at Luther (College), because you worked for 57 years with Nordic Choir. So, one of my questions is how, when you were first starting at Luther, how would you define the sound of Nordic Choir, how would you define the Lutheran Choral Tradition here at

Luther, at the beginning? If we think about it in three stages, maybe your beginning stage, your middle and your late stage.

Weston: There wasn't a beginning stage in the sense that Luther was co-ed only in 1936, and so when I came it was the Scholacantorum (conducted by Theodor Hoelty-Nickel) which was the men's choir, and Women's Chorus (conducted by Clara Hoyt). So that's when I started to understand there had been two year choral tradition under (Sigvart) Steen who graduated from both Luther and St. Olaf and I was going to think to tie it in to your earlier question.

Ryan: Let me rephrase it to this question. When you started conducting Nordic Choir, how did the sound of your Nordic Choir tie into the Lutheran Chorale Tradition?

Weston: Well, there was a carload of St. Olaf people who came down to listen, and they went home and reported that there's nothing to be afraid of. So it was the sound that I naturally went to which was shaped by Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians.

Ryan: I know you're heavily influenced beginning with Fred Waring and Pennsylvanians. How did that evolve and change from your beginning to your middle stages and later on to your later stages at Nordic?

Weston: I heard Robert Shaw Chorale sing at the University of Northern Iowa and the added vibrancy and incredible sense of rhythm was a compelling factor. And at the same time I realized that we'd be going out and singing to audiences that had heard St. Olaf and Concordia (College), so that was always at the back of my mind.

Ryan: By having that in the back of your mind, how did that affect you and your style of teaching at Nordic, and your preparation?

Weston: I think it always gave me a sense of reserve. I was affected by the early years at St. Olaf. F. Melius had to pick his ideal soprano and the other (sopranos) who came the closest were in, and I just thought that opposites, the right opposites put together, end up making a warm, more natural sound.

Ryan: When did you develop your style of voice placement?

Weston: Day one.

Ryan: So right away at the very beginning of Nordic?

Weston: Yes. I realized that I didn't fully understand the approach that Paul (Christiansen) and Olaf (Christiansen) were using, but I knew the end result. And it was pleasing.

Ryan: Since you brought up Paul and Olaf Christiansen, how did your teaching style, how did your musical sense, how was it similar to theirs, and along those lines, how was it different?

Weston: Well, it was similar in that I naturally, I found voices who did not have to be manipulated.

Ryan: You're saying that you wanted voices that didn't need to be manipulated?

Weston: My first year there were two altos and so I asked Gertrude how do you blend with Gwen, and her answer was "I don't know, I just try to sound like her." I knew that was wrong because it was denying the individual voice. The reserve of the Christiansen style was always holding me in check from being as individualistic, yet vibrant as Shaw. Am I making sense?

Ryan: So would you agree with the statement that your style and Nordic Choir had a more individualistic style to each other's voices than Concordia and St. Olaf at the time?

Weston: Definitely.

Ryan: In your opinion, how else did that benefit the choir and the singers? Are there any other factors that would contribute?

Weston: Well, it was to a degree of an individuation (individualization) that I would allow, that's getting there? And it was my inner ear with the Fred Waring's beautiful rich sound that was always present, but there was always the struggle in my mind. My inner struggle...

It was about 1960 I sat in on one of (Olaf) Christiansen's workshops and I was affirmed at what I felt his goal was to be, but I just couldn't shake that natural Fred Waring sound. And I definitely approached rhythm quite dramatically differently.

Ryan: Dramatically differently from the Christiansens? How so?

Weston: Yes. The necessity of the upbeat is the basis of the phrase. Not just the downbeat. The magic of music lies in the upbeat.

Ryan: And you would say that would be different than the Christiansen School?

Weston: Yes. Harold Decker was following up on a comment that Olaf was making about rhythm, and he whispered in my ear “That is not rhythm. It just did not dance.” I don’t think you can beat that point. I don’t know, you’ll have to decide.

Ryan: If you had to put your definition onto rhythm, what is it?

Weston: Very simple, the magic of music lies in the upbeat. That’s it.

Ryan: Going along with your definitions, what would be then your definition of blend?

Weston: Blend is the unified sound without robbing the natural richness. That could be it there.

Ryan: Would you please talk about your thought process behind your approach to preparing your choir both for blend, for vibrancy, for rhythm, just preparing your choirs, your approach at preparing choirs, specifically Nordic Choir?

Weston: Well, the first step had to be placement. Unified but not robbed of its individuation (individualization).

Ryan: And that’s in regard to placement, or in regards to your overall sound?

Weston: Well, the first thing would be placement and the second place would be rhythm. And Shaw’s definition of rhythm was not just timing, but it was timing and space.

Ryan: Do you agree with Shaw’s statement that rhythm is the most important idea for blend?

Weston: I’ll go a long way towards that way, yeah.

Ryan: How did Nordic Choir’s sound evolve over the years?

Weston: A lot of it was natural because we kept getting more and more better voices which then presented the problem of how to handle larger voices and how to handle greater degree of vibrato. And now that opera is so strong at Luther, this gives (Allen) Hightower pause for reflection.

That's how it just naturally evolves with the challenge of how much I... maybe the finest recording we ever did was in 1959.

Ryan: If you had to list the most important attributes or aspects in your mind for choir, anything, what would they be?

Weston: Music must dance, and that's rhythm. And so how do you do? A sense of space, brought about by the upbeat going to the downbeat.

Ryan: You're talking about arsic versus thetic.

Weston: Well it's arsis and thesis both (now he sings it). The sense is basic.

Ryan: So it's definitely rhythm?

Weston: Well, the degree that one uses quartets. I had done a workshop at a Shaw thing and as I was telling about quartets and I said this could be tenors, this could be altos, tenors or basses or whatever, I had certain signals and Olaf came in the next day and did his and said "How did you keep them together with quartets? I suppose you had to devise some system!" and they just broke into laughter because it was just totally the opposite. But that's where you learn.

Ryan: You're talking about your mixed formation, right?

Weston: Yes.

Ryan: What do you think the benefits of the quartets were?

Weston: Freedom. Well, the kids loved it so much.

Ryan: Now, you say freedom. In your mixed formation of quartets, what do you feel allowed the freedom that wasn't as apparent in standard, blocked formation?

Weston: Pitch oftentimes improves.

Ryan: Why do you believe that is?

Weston: You know you're really good, but you're really hard, too!

Ryan: I'm sorry. You think it might just be because of a better awareness of all the various parts around?

Weston: Certainly. And they're not trying so hard to blend with the same part.

Ryan: My thinking behind it is because each singer, by hearing all those other parts, can experience the totality of the music rather than just partials and I think that allows for a moving and other worldly experience.

Weston: It's a very good point because in certain acoustics the back row can't even hear what the front row's doing. And in quartets, that's...

Ryan: If you had to define a technique that's in the Lutheran Choral Tradition that would be consistent throughout, say, Concordia, St. Olaf, Luther, Augustana, and maybe even PLU and Wartburg (Colleges), if you had to think of some sort of technique or common ideal, what would it be?

Weston: How you approach rhythm.

Ryan: And you believe St. Olaf and Concordia also have a large emphasis on rhythm, too?

Weston: No. I don't know that I dare say this, but you have to use your judgment. I was always impressed by St. Olaf, but I was never moved by them. There's a certain sameness all the time. But I just don't... And Paul was tops at Concordia. Big sound, big sound - impressive but not moving.

Ryan: Can you speak about the Paul vs. Olaf sound?

Weston: Paul wanted it to be in an orchestra. Always an orchestral sound, richness, unlike F. Melius. It was just Paul. Olaf was more like F. Melius then Paul.

Ryan: Talk to me about the importance of the text in the music, for yourself and for the Lutheran Choral Tradition in general.

Weston: How could you ever get emotion in the tone if you don't have a text that provides imagination? I talked quite a bit about this in Ohio (Ohio Music Educators Workshop). I had band and orchestra directors there and so we

were... that's when I had the band when Fred Nyline would go to Japan and we were learning the "Hounds of Spring". There's no text for anything like that. It's an ABA, and the first part was (*singing*) and more predominantly woodwinds. And then the middle part was a beautiful English horn solo, very melodic, and the last part was more bright, more brilliant, more brass (*singing*). We had gotten it so they could play it quite well. Very well. So the president of the band came to band (rehearsal) and said can I tell you a story? Can I tell the band a story? Well I guess so. Once there was a little dog that was going to join with the hunt for the first time, and when he was getting ready for the hunt, he was jolly and full of excitement and finally, he was just a bit too young, so he sees a tree and goes over to take a nap, and then hears the foxes again and wakes up and so he just runs at the fox with new zeal. Okay, band, here's the downbeat. Didn't say a word. They never played it better. Why? In their imaginations, they saw this little dog. And it may not have been the same story, but that's exactly what my point was in Ohio. There's no way that you can get emotion in the tone except through the gift of imagination. Well, the bands have a bigger challenge, that's all there is to it. But the choirs have the text.

I don't want to say too much. Hightower and I have talked a lot about this. Texas is technique, technique, technique. And I said "You're such a deep Christian - so why don't you once in a while ask them (the choir) why did the composer do this? What does he do with the text? What does it do to the story?" (Hightower) "I must try to incorporate more of that."

You know, we were singing a very close chord one time at Nordic, like F, G flat, A flat, B flat, C and I said to Nordic "What does this remind you of? What does this remind you of? This gal raised her hand, "Oh I know, it's Monet! It's Monet!" I knew right away what that meant. But what did it mean to the physics major? Nothing! So we talked a little bit about what that meant. But you as a director have to know what is it that makes it right or makes it wrong. There's two very simple things. Either the note is too long or too short. Or it's too loud or too soft. You never get the big crescendo in the Impressionist period.

So the text is just indispensable. But it's got to have a text that has the use of imagination. And if you are going to put down the defining technique at Nordic Choir, it's the technique of imagination.

We studied this one time at Minnesota ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) and I asked if they used mainly cognitive, you know what I mean by that, affective, or kinesthetic. 98% of their hands lit up on cognitive! And that's the result of the early Christiansen approach.

When you listen to Concordia Choir...I think it's still basically Paul. "Why don't you...I want the longest vowel you can sing! Then you can throw in a consonant. But I want that vowel! Keep your jaw down – just go like this all the time!"

St. Olaf does not do it to that degree because (Anton Armstrong) just chooses a different type of voice, but Paul was always thinking about the cellos, was talking about the viola with that type of sound.

And on YouTube with St. Olaf, I'm sure they put on it because it's a beautiful sound.

More and more, Hightower uses less and less vibrato. And what do you think of (Ed) Andereck (Chair of Luther Voice Department)... what he thinks about that?

Ryan: Please speak to me about anything that comes to mind in regards to the Lutheran Choral Tradition, maybe here at Nordic, or just in general when Kenneth Jennings came on the scene. And how did his complete change of St. Olaf sound affect maybe you?

Weston: His repertoire was different and challenging. I was just so enamored about hearing his sound that I didn't know enough about why... So anyway, Jennings took over. I think there was more natural richness, phrasing, and natural musicianship than Olaf. It wasn't Shaw, but it was a step towards Shaw. The Shaw approach that's in the Lutheran Choral Tradition is Andy Last. He is just...oh, those eyes, and prepares with heart just like this all the time. I think that he's the greatest talent I know of right now.

I like Lee Nelson at Wartburg very much also...but he sang under Paul all those years.

You should listen to (name redacted). She regressed as a singer when she sang under Paul.

Ryan: Where do you see the Lutheran Choral Tradition heading, musically?

Weston: If Shaw were still around, I'd know what to say. When I present baroque phrasing to (conductors), it's pretty brand new. Well of course, there will be repertoire. A little multiculturalism. And now we're starting to do music from all over the world.

Weston: Well, I think that somebody, and hopefully your paper will... Why did the Lutheran Choral Tradition become so popular? They were hearing a choir that could sing in tune, otherwise it was Bach oratorio societies. And when St. Olaf filled the Metropolitan Opera House in 1920, they never heard such a unified sound, ever! Then in the late 20's there was an article that came out in NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) "Don't go to hear them, they just ruin your voice." Well, so you read that, what's your inclination?

Ryan: You're going to go listen to them.

Weston: That's exactly what happened. Just what life is. I'm going to go back to this, but I can't help it First of all, why did the St. Olaf's Choir start to tour? And why did the people like to go? Because they were singing "O Day Full of Grace", and they were singing "Beautiful Savior", and they were singing "Praise to the Lord". All these hymns that came out of the hymn book!

And so therefore these Norwegians were hearing their music, and done well. And the next step is when they could start touring, why did the administration at St. Olaf support it so? Why did they allow them to take their exams early so that they could have more time to tour? Was it just money? It was more than that. 'Cause they were feeding their native people and they would ...there is a basketful of Norwegians in Brooklyn - you know - there is a famous (Norwegian) church there. And so I was asked this question one time in Pennsylvania, "What's so special about the Midwest?" and I said, "It was tradition." "Well, Harvard and Yale and Princeton have a tradition longer than you do. So, what is it?" And I thought for a little bit and I said "Every one of your people left the Church with your schools and not a single Lutheran college has ever left the Church."

Ryan: That's a profound – actually that's a great statement.

Weston: I know I'm right.

Ryan: Now what would you say is your greatest contribution to the choral art and the Lutheran Choral Tradition?

Weston: Imagination and freedom. In everything in a sense, there's a flagship and that is St. Olaf. The minute that they succeed in anything, or the minute that Concordia succeeds in something, or the minute that Luther does this concert for parents in September, it's copied, it's copied immediately. That Parent's Day Concert in September, it's just incredible, 3 weeks after the kids have gotten here, there's no place to sit! (in the concert) They get such excitement. Our Christmas concerts, they can't get away from it. And what happens is they're just sold, you know. **Although the new president at Luther and I were talking after Christmas at Luther because I thought she'd be quite impressed.** She said "I was", but she said "I heard the "Messiah" at Luther and I've never heard anything greater."

Ryan: What do you think is the effect of the Lutheran Choral Tradition on the modern day choral sound in the United States?

Weston: I think it's less and less. You're going to ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) conventions more and more, you hear the community choirs. And I'm all for it, I think it's just wonderful what they're doing, and yet at the same time there will still be touring of the Lutheran groups. Thank goodness.

Ryan: Do you think that the sound of the Lutheran Choral Tradition had a large affect on the choral sound of other choirs?

Weston: I don't think so because most of them are more operatic. But be sure you go back as much as you can to what it was in the beginning, and of course it was with F. Melius - you will sing like boys! Why did that take a hold? The St. Olaf approach had to take place, absolutely had to take place because they had to prove that choirs could sing in tune. So their's was pitch, pitch, pitch. A Concordia graduate that retired about two years ago - he was at a college down in Nebraska, and I said "How's it going?" "Oh what a relief, I don't have to worry about getting a chord in tune every day." See, that's just there, there, there, there, it still is.

Ryan: That installment of F. Melius going to pitch to pitch to pitch.

Weston: In that you've got that exactness. But then Shaw comes along and rhythm is not timing, it's basic. Shaw just took the Lutheran Choral Tradition and just ...

Ryan: Ripped it apart almost, turned it inside out.

Weston: Yeah, for once you learned that everything didn't have to be a capella. And rhythm is incredibly important intensity. Thank goodness I got in on that. One of the guys that came down early and said well there's nothing going on down there, you know.

Ryan: When they came down from St. Olaf to Luther?

Weston: Yes. He asked me to come do a summer camp for him and I did. And he said "Well, we sort of missed the boat didn't we?" In other words, it was different.

Ryan: What do you mean it was different? What was different?

Weston: All these things we've been talking about .

Ryan: Well, thank you for giving me an hour and ten minutes of your time.

Weston: You know Paul's son.

Ryan: Eric (Christiansen)?

Weston: Yes. He worked for his dad for a while, but there's something about Eric. Those kids just love it. But he's very happy where he is.

Ryan: Any final thoughts?

Weston: Well, the Lutheran Choral Tradition surely is not dead.

Weston: And it's the touring that does it.

Ryan: Well, thank you.

Weston: What time is it, did you say?

Ryan: It is 4:24.

Weston: When does Jennaya's (Robison) choir start?

Ryan: Would you like to go and listen?

Weston: Yeah!

**A.2. ALLEN HIGHTOWER INTERVIEW WITH RYAN GOESSL
(FEBRUARY 13, 2014)**

Ryan: Could you tell me what you're doing and your background a little bit?

Allen: Well, I grew up in Texas which is a choral culture all its own. I mean, the size of Texas and the intensity of the music scene is such that, I think you could say that there's a Texas choral tradition. If you were to go to a National ACDA and hear high school choirs from Texas, I think you'd be pretty amazed at the strength of the public schools. I think deeply rooted in the church music scene and in the public schools, I happen to think there's no place that can quite rival it. I know I'm partial. And the Midwest has its own bragging rights, you know.

So, I grew up in Texas and kind of came to music first and studied piano. Then I was a horn player in band and it wasn't really until the 8th grade that the choir director who was both at the junior high, the high school and my church music director, since it was a very small town, he recruited me into choral music, into choir as an accompanist.

So then probably in high school I began to really fall in love with this sort of spiritual connection between text and music, and as a person of faith, it really seemed to resonate with me.

Through a workshop with a man named Bev Henson, B.R. Henson who had a very prestigious track record in teaching, conducting, I went to Sam Houston State University.

I probably had maybe heard of some of the Lutheran colleges perhaps, but deep in the heart of Texas, one doesn't really sense a need to go beyond that, and it's not arrogance, as much as it is there are so many good options.

So I studied with Bev Henson there and did a graduate music education, studied voice but was still a little more piano oriented. I saw Donald Neuen do a Texas All State and was very taken with his energy and his charisma and decided that I would like to study with him further. I did a summer workshop with him after my junior year, and then decided to go onto a masters with him at Eastman and had a really overall good experience there. So after my time at Eastman then, I really toyed with going on for further conducting studies, but instead I opted to come back to Texas and to teach high school. So I came back to Texas and taught 6 years high school, had really good informative experiences there. It was a great time to figure out a lot about myself and how I wanted to work, how I wanted to be in rehearsal, and how I wanted to make music.

After 6 years I was engaged and my wife was still finishing her undergraduate, so I spent a year at Baylor University and did a second masters in orchestral conducting, and at the same time you know I played for the Chamber Singers at Baylor. Donald Bailey was the choral director there, and is a wonderful godly man, and a really fine pedagogue as well. But I studied with a voice teacher there, John Van Cura, who really for the first time helped me figured out a little bit how to sing, and so I think he had a really strong influence on my approach to pedagogy in the choral rehearsal.

So then after that time at Baylor, then I went on to California. Having worked with Don Neuen at the masters level, I was looking at several different schools. There was a trust with Don and I knew him. And what probably clenched me going to California State University as opposed to University of Michigan which was kind of my other top choice, was I saw advertised in Chorus America Magazine an opportunity to work with one of the professional choruses in the country, so I sent in my application and I specified Los Angeles. I got a call on Valentines' Day 1997 from Paul Salamunovich who said "I've talked to Don Neuen about you and I have your materials and if you'd like come do this internship with me, that would be great." So we talked about that a bit, and then that's what we ended up doing. I went to California, I spent 3 years there, my wife sang in the master chorale, I was Paul's intern, attended countless rehearsals, board meetings, the whole stuff. So I really treasured that time with Paul.

Allen: So after 3 years in Texas, 3 years in California, 3 years in Los Angeles, I was finishing up the doctorate, applying for jobs, and low and behold, a job at my undergraduate school came open. Still a lot of professors who taught me were there, you know. So I was very fortunate to get that as a first college job, Sam Houston State. It was a bit of a low ebb in terms of enrollment, the level of the choral program there, which is kind of what you want to start you off so there's some room to build and grow, and so I was there 10 full years. I think it was a time of real growth in the program, growth for me, growth professionally. You know, I had toyed with the idea of other jobs because I had come to it fairly young, and few of us are like Weston who are at one job forever.

So anyway, I had been at Eastman with Craig Arnold. Craig Arnold was a doctoral student with Don, and I was a master's student, so we had known each other. And I remember in 2005 when I saw in the Choral Journal congratulations to Craig Arnold on his appointment to Luther College, I thought it was a perfect match made in heaven, the perfect place, he'll be there forever. So when I heard then that he was leaving, I found that interesting. Then I got an email from the president's office about a week after that, saying "You have been profiled as a person who might be a potential fit for our choral position. Would you be interested in applying?"

People in my Texas world could never figure out why I was going to Iowa. Iowa? I would try to explain to them that if you're a football coach and the University of Alabama calls you, you at least talk to them, and I consider that a parallel in the choral world. That's Luther's choral tradition. Weston Noble's work here is in that rarefied air, if you will, that unique kind of world of choral music.

So I applied to the Luther job because I was invited - I would not have, had I not been invited. I was a semi-finalist or finalist at University of Georgia and I was looking at that job.

Anyway, so I came to Luther and the rehearsal with Nordic was really a lovely connection. And so I was offered the job; I was one of 4 finalists, in my opinion the least likely fit, being not from the Lutheran tradition, being a Texan, not even being Lutheran. So I happen to think that it was a divine appointment, that God was in the sails, you know, and I don't say that with any arrogance on my part, it's His work, not mine.

So it was very difficult to leave Texas, and leave all that was secure. I had a wonderful church job, I had a community choir, Sam Houston State for 10 years, very secure there, tenured professor.

So then came to Luther and, you know, there have been some adjustments on my part, but it's been, on the whole, a tremendous growing opportunity and working with colleagues and students. And then to become part of this tradition, that's a whole other topic.

Ryan: Obviously it had to be a difficult decision coming from Sam Houston to here. What was the driving factor?

Allen: Well, I think we all reach the point where we feel like in a given situation, we've developed as much as we can and after this it would be mostly maintenance. And having gone back to my undergraduate alma mater and giving it my best for 10 years, since the success of that, I felt like there needed to be another chapter, and yet, it very hard to leave.

I think that the uniqueness of a program like Luther where there are 500 singers, where there are 4 choral conductors, where there are 6 auditioned choirs, where there's support for touring and recording, just the platform that it creates in one's own career growth is really significant.

To even to say that it sounds somehow shallow, but I don't think that unless one is called as a missionary you don't necessarily look at a job change at "How can I go help those people?" And yet the extraordinary thing is that I think my own interior has been molded by this place and this experience, at least to a maybe even a greater extent than I may have molded anyone myself through my work here.

Ryan: Getting onto the Lutheran aspect of things - I'm asking everybody this question – if you had to define the character of the Lutheran choral tradition and the characteristics of it, what would you say?

Allen: Well, I would say that it's primarily a body of sacred repertoire, primarily, a cappella repertoire. What's been interesting to me is how that term means different things to different people. Like someone says, "Oh you know, I like the old hymns". Well, do mean you like the old hymns from the 1930's and 40's or do you like the old hymns from the 1680's? So for some people this choral tradition is rooted in F. Melius Christiansen and what's happened in

the last 100 – 150 years. For some of us it's rooted in JS Bach, and Heinrich Schütz and all of that. And so, most specifically I think it has to do with what's rooted in what happened at St. Olaf, with Christiansen's and how that influenced sister schools in terms of having an a cappella choir that toured and sacred repertoire.

Ryan: Knowing the characteristics of the Lutheran Choral Tradition and being a Lutheran chorus, how does that influence you in your rehearsal technique and your vision for Nordic Choir?

Allen: As a person of faith, it is not difficult for me to focus on sacred repertoire. Nordic Choir... I think when students enter that ensemble they expect to work really hard, they expect to be reasonably challenged. They expect to be stretched. So part of my journey with them is finding a balance of being that person who pushes them really hard musically, like you might find at any conservatory or big state university. To also to have a kind of pastoral side of what we're about, an unintrusive [sic] one, I hope, but one that's sensitive to their own life situation, that wants to know that on an appropriate personal level that is interested in their overall growth as human beings.

And particularly as I think about this, this Weston Noble Endowed Chair which I am now very honored to hold, and in the description of that it talks about Weston's work, and it also talks about the fact that he bore witness to the Gospel. And so that is I hope a daily part of what I'm about, not so much in preaching, but in trying to live that out.

So you probably should guide me back to what the question was, because I tend to ramble.

Ryan: So the influence of Lutheran choral tradition on Nordic Choir and your vision for Nordic Choir.

Allen: You know, the recordings I've heard of Weston's work, and I never heard the choir live. I think it that was a cousin, but not a brother of the St. Olaf tradition, if you will. Weston had his own sound in his ear, influenced by Shaw. Influenced by... not as restricted a sound, if you will.

Ryan: By Fred Waring and Shaw...

Allen: Yeah. So it certainly was rooted in the a cappella tradition, in the sacred tradition. But I think that his sound was unique to Weston, and so I think that it would be a different thing if one were going to St. Olaf or perhaps to Concordia in terms of the expectation. So the feedback that I had gotten... and then Craig came for 5 years and Craig's a wonderful artist/teacher and he had his own sort of sounds in his ears. And then I come in... which I think in a way paved the way for me to be able to have a certain amount of freedom in coloring with the sounds that I wanted.

You know, I think Craig had a very dark sort of sound in his ear and a very rich resonance sort of sound. I'm a bit obsessed with intonation and a lot of the English choral tradition and so, sort of balanced with what I had in my inner ear, and meeting the kids where they sort of ARE, pedagogically, I think it certainly has moved sound in a certain direction, as I work for clarity, as I work for intonation, as I work for diction that speaks...

Yeah, so that's sort of where the sound, I think, is at.

I think that's one of the wonderful things about our own art is that, certainly, if you listen to Anton's recordings and if you listen to his predecessor and HIS predecessor, you see an enormous evolution of sound, although rooted in a tradition.

Ryan: What do you think that your sound strengths are? What do you feel are your strengths that you can help them? And on the other hand, what do you feel are places where you have room to grow?

Allen: Well, personally say, I remember working with one of my outstanding basses my first year at Luther. He knocked on the door one day in the fall and said "So do you mean to tell me you want this sound on this piece, but that you want a different sound on a different piece?" He was a little befuddled by that. So from influences like Joe Flummerfelt, I believe that the sound should grow out of the piece itself to some extent. Obviously there are basic factors, but hopefully, our Brahms sounded a little different than our Byrd last night, in terms of vibrato, in terms of shape, in terms of dynamic scope, all those things.

I think people tend to like my men's sound, you know. As a male singer, I obviously connect with them on a different level. I work for a freedom of sound which is rooted in vocal pedagogy, choral pedagogy first, singing on the breath. Singing how fully, but all at the same time having shaped an ensemble

approach to what they're doing. I think my journey with women's singing is continuing. It's interesting that the sound that I inherited from Craig in the soprano section, although my sound is a little brighter generally than his, the soprano sound sang very straight when I first came to Luther, so I would find myself, if I'm doing a spiritual or something myself actually having to ASK for vibrato, which is an unusual thing in the world of American choral music. So I thought if it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it's working, if they're singing beautifully, if they're singing in tune... And so I tend to try to find the balance of voices in that section, obviously like anyone would of some first sopranos who are just light floaters and can sing high C's and high F's, and all that. And then there's some color, some depth in the second sopranos.

So I certainly think I'm still evolving, having had some really strong influences like we talked about with Paul (Salamunovich), (Donald) Neuen, sort of any of us figuring out, what IS my sound, evolving and developing.

And so I think I want to continue to become more, well...hard to put into words...

Like I asked my colleague, Jennaya, "How about coming and working with the women sometime?" And she will, I'm sure. She's only been here a short time. But I think there's a warmth and a freedom sometimes that I don't quite get in the women because of the registration issues that when I deal with that are different with the men, that I inherently understand in the men, that women are different. Particularly in the altos when they're trying to sing around E natural and F in tune, and balance the chest and head, and on the upper side, sort of that B natural to F, that passaggio, to balance all of that.

Though God is perfect, our voices are usually not. So we're all figuring that out. So I guess that would be in terms of sort of just technical things.

Ryan: So what do you think the state is of the Lutheran choral tradition today in regards of St. Olaf, Concordia, Luther, where do you feel that it's at today? Do you think it's building? Do you think it's getting weaker? Or anything that comes to mind?

Allen: Interesting. I'm always jazzed by student-age kids, high school kids, whatever, that identify with these choirs, come to our concerts, that want to be a part of that. They see the blue robes, they see the hands held. They see the love in the eyes of the singers, never knowing probably that a third of those

kids sing in the opera, too. So, certainly I think this tradition will carry on and move forward. I think it's a careful balancing act because any tradition that becomes stuck, doesn't evolve, then it's, at least for me, it's boring. For me I think as I look at Anton's work, and I look at my own work, repertoire is really a key element of that. I remember visiting with Dale Warland – not that we visit often, but we had some time together, maybe six months ago, a year ago, and he was looking through my concert program and he said “Allen, I think you're in a little bit of a rut” and so we talked about what that meant. And he's a St. Olaf grad, and he was saying “Don't feel obligated to sing that Christiansen this or that, whatever.” I think that for me, finding a balance as I tried to do last night, when we sang “O Day Full of Grace” and yet we sang a Brahms's quartet and we sang renaissance music, and yes we sang Bach, which is part of for me the larger Lutheran tradition, is that repertoire is sort of our textbook and so, both academically and musically, that we remain rooted in the tradition in terms of singing some of that repertoire, and certainly were influenced in the root sound that we have as an a cappella choir, that we sound different than some distant big university choir down south, whatever. We're rooted in it, but as artists and musicians, we're not limited by it. But it's a facet of who we are, in our... yeah. That's important to me. I feel like I was hired by Luther in part because I brought a different voice, because I brought something different, something fresh, different influences. And yet it was made clear to me, that this is what the tradition is and to live into it, to breathe life into it and not to drop it. You know, I think if I took Nordic out of robes and put them in tuxedos, I would get more flak than if you cancelled the football program at Luther.

Ryan: So going along with that question, it's usually my last question but it fits in right now, where do you see the future of Lutheran chorale tradition? That's a difficult one, I know, I'm sorry.

Allen: Well, clearly in the United States, this tradition has made - if you read Howard Swan's “Five Schools”, clearly this is one of those schools, so it's a significant pillar of the American choral tradition. So I think as long as you have really dynamic people in those leadership roles, and people who are engaging the larger choral community and are not somehow cut off in their own little tiny world, the Lutheran choral mafia, that it will continue to thrive significantly. Things that people ask me - “what are some things you want to do differently maybe?” I think that there should be concerted music that

happens here, I wish. And we do have it from time to time - oratorios and Bach cantatas and this kind of things – I mean it's a part of the tradition it is, but I'd be happy to see more and it's a balance - orchestras and that kind of thing. I would be sad if students went away thinking that the Lutheran tradition began with Christiansen, though he made a tremendous American contribution - again, going back to Schütz and Bach and the earlier people of the church. I think it will always be here, and the fact that it is rooted in undergraduate programs is somehow special and unique. I was in Texas last week, and a very successful high school chorale director said, "Does Luther offer a doctorate?" No it doesn't, undergrad only program. Because he hears unique things in the choir in the tradition that he'd like to be a part of. But you have to kind of go there as an undergraduate so I think it's kind of like we've got a certain market cornered where if you want get it you've got to get it as an undergrad, because you're not going to get it otherwise.

Ryan: I never thought of it that way.

Allen: I remember when I came to Luther I got a sweet note from Bill Weinert who is at Eastman, a wonderful man, and he said "You know, Allen, that was always my dream job". The was kind of neat for me because I'm an Eastman grad, and you think of these conservatories as being the points of arrival, and yet, the atmosphere, the support, the vision and the role of choral music in these liberal arts colleges is unique.

So as to the future I think that as long as there's a dynamic choral community in America that the Lutheran choral tradition will have an important role to play. Again, though, I think it's incumbent on us that we stay rooted and that we maintain the a cappella tradition. I think that's really significant, the a cappella tradition. And the sacred tradition, that there has to be an openness to a broader repertoire, or we become a kind of cliché. Oh you know those Lutheran choirs, all they sing is.... you know... And we limit our student's experience.

So I think it's largely dependent on who are the people? Who's going to follow Anton? Who's going to follow René? Who will follow me someday? And I think it goes deeper than just the sort of couple of flagship choirs. I know my colleague Andy Last is just such a gifted teacher, and a marvelous human being. He's bringing his own voice to that... I'm so pleased and proud of his work there. And for me, it also has to do with, I mean, I couldn't

see a person in one of these roles in these Lutheran colleges who wasn't a person of faith. I mean, that's even harder for me to fathom than if they came out of the Lutheran choral tradition or not. And I kind of think Luther kind of stepped out, if you will, in doing that because I think that there was a ... and I hope this is not perceived as boasting, I think there was a resonance in my own approach to faith that was maybe in some ways a little Weston-esque, in terms of being unashamed of being who I am as a Christian. So I think that's a really important part of the tradition that will continue.

And that's not to suggest that all our singers adhere to the same faith because they certainly do not. And yet, I've had many conversations with a student who may be an atheist or agnostic in this point in their lives. They're still enriched by the dynamic sort of element of community and of human love that takes place in those experiences, that even though it's sacred music to which they don't specifically adhere, they find a way to connect. And so I think it's the spirituality not in the sort of general sense of "God is in that rock", but the Christian tradition that makes the Lutheran choral tradition unique. And I remember when Donald Bailey went to Baylor he said "I want to make Baylor the St. Olaf of the South." Whether that's happened or not, I don't know. I know my friend Alan Raines is doing great work there, but I think that sacred dimension is really crucial.

Ryan: What do you feel the affect of the Lutheran choral tradition, the sound technique that the Lutheran choral tradition, how do you think that has affected the general sound, especially in the American populace of choirs?

Allen: Well, I do. I think about a soprano sound, for instance, sort of like the violin section in the orchestra. It does tend to put a stamp on it, if you will. I remember giving an interview to some person once, and I talked about the sound, and I said that a little bit like the English, my men tend to sing a little more robustly and my women with more restraint, in that sort of pyramid approach. So I think that probably in the Midwest you're more likely to get a soprano coming in from a high school having sung with a leaner, cleaner, lighter sound in her choral experience than you might in California, Texas, whatever, which are not so influenced by that tradition. So I think that in terms of the sound, there is a more adherence to the pyramid. Certainly here in the St. Olaf sound, I don't know to what extent really, the Concordia sound, but I

work for it both numerically in terms of how many sopranos and how many basses and just the lyricism of the approach.

In terms of dark and bright in those kind of general terms, kind of like liberal and conservative, which are overused terms, I hear a lot of variety, and I think if Rene and I were to work the same choir we'd get a very different sound. It's in the way our bodies work, and what drives our sound, what our unique sensitivities are. I think partially because of my influence with Paul, I try to avoid pressing and screeching. I also will say I'm never louder than lovely and yet at times, like when we got the end of "O Day Full of Grace", emotionally it needs to open up. And so to find the balance of that... so by all means, I think through repertoire and through, particularly in the trebles, the women's sound, I think there's a likeness, a leanness that is further from the operatic sound that may be the approach that the men's sections generally sing at.

I think Anton's sound, he would have to quantify it himself, you know I think he uses what I would qualify as the leanest sound of all in terms of weight and in terms of just general lyricism, of color, in terms of dynamic scope. I think his fortissimo is more like our mezzo-forte, especially in the men. I think he takes this never louder than lovely thing very, very seriously. There's never a sound that's not beautiful in his choir. And sometimes I think, René, I'd risk a little more in terms of getting it emotional. Fervor, perhaps?

I'm not talking negatively or positively, I'm just talking about the sound.

So how is it influenced? Well, I think you send out disciples. We took a picture when we were at the ACDA office last week, and there were probably out of Nordic's 72 singers on tour, easily 25 kids who were in music education, a third of the choir, roughly. And so you send those people out and they've had those experiences, and they bring that general sense of choral sound to the next generation of teaching.

Feel free to focus me more.

Ryan: Actually, let's go back – you're talking about leanness of the Lutheran Choral Tradition – how has that affected other non-Lutheran Choral Tradition choirs? Or has it?

Allen: Well, I think the proliferation of recordings has been significant. I remember before I ever visited Minnesota or Iowa, I had recordings of some of these choirs, and I admired aspects of the sound. I really liked the way those sopranos sound for instance...the touring...

I don't know, this is a topic that maybe people who have been in this tradition a lot longer than 4 years can address more clearly. I just think that the choral art more than band or orchestra, is enormously influenced by the person in front, in their collective experiences. So I guess the question would be, so if I were to stand in front of the USC chamber singers or Florida State chamber singers, or Sam Houston State Chorale, or whatever, how much would the choir sound differently than Nordic Choir? And I have to think after a certain amount of time, not too much differently. Not because of the tradition as much, but because of my life experience and what's in my ear.

I mean (Paul) Salamunovich used to say, "Allen, there are two kind of choral directors. There are the kind that it doesn't matter who's in the choir, after a period, that choir's going to have their sound. And then there are the choral directors that the choir sounds like a collective of the voices that are in that choir. Right? So obviously, his preference is that you shape the choir by your own sound preferences.

So I think that through recordings and through touring people are hearing this sort of perfect, if you will, choral tone, in which blend - and that's a bad word in a lot of people's mouth, I know - but let's call it what it really is, that you're singing with a sense of shared balance, and shared pitch, and shared volume, that aspect, that sense of choral blend if you will, or ensemble singing, is really significant to the Lutheran tradition. And I think it's had a very broad impact on American choral music. You know certainly, and I don't mean to simplify, but if you think about the Shaw School, where rhythm is the kind of binding element of everything that's done, and you listen to the early Shaw Chorale, and you hear a lot of individuals! It's not a blended sound in some ways - it's a dynamic sound, but it's not this sort of blending we're all singing the same voice, we're all agreeing, we're not taking days to put everybody in the exactly the right place, the sort of Weston thing. What's interesting to me, is to think that Weston for instance, in a sense didn't grow up in the choral tradition, in a sense he did but in a sense he didn't, in that Luther had the

men's choir, and then he kind of came back to the mixed choir and then has been influenced himself by some of others.

Ryan: Talk to me about the influence of Weston on specifically Lutheran choral tradition, and in that regards to outside the Lutheran choral tradition.

Allen: I had heard of Weston far before I had heard of Luther College. I knew of his reputation as a clinician having done all-states and all that kind of thing, and I knew about his rehearsing quartet and his festivals, and his being really Christ-like and a godly, loving kind of person, I knew all of that before I knew about the sound and what he did. State the question one more time?

Ryan: Weston's influence on the Lutheran choral tradition and the evolution of the choir from him, anything you think about Weston.

Allen: When I think about Weston, again, I think about, though the term I think has become somewhat trite, a deeply spiritual person, and that really informs everything that he does. Also a person whose passion for music is such a model – I hold him up as an example to the Nordic choir frequently. I talk about even on tour, our next to last performance we're still rehearsing a little bit and I think it's one of the driving things. Here's a man who's 91 years old and still has his passion in music making because it's such an evolving thing. You never arrive in a way. So his influence I think has been profound.

I say this lovingly, and as a Star Wars nut in the 1970's, 'cause and that's my era when I grew up as a kid. I say this - he's the Yoda of choral music in America. I say that because he's wise and because he's kind, and there's such depth. All those things. So I consider myself one of his young padawans. His Luke Skywalker, I don't know. Because he's been so generous with his time with me, and with his thoughts, and never invasive. His influence has been profound. Because he's so well loved, you know.

It's hard to separate his success as a musician from his sort of benevolence as a human being. So I don't feel fully qualified to talk about his musicianship like someone who has experienced it first hand – you know, clearly a great musician. But what I come away with is really how he made people FEEL rather than how the choir sounded, at the end of the day. How did they FEEL in that experience? You know the old adage "They won't remember what you said, but how you made them FEEL." So I think he's I think he's had an

influence on our profession that's brought a certain civility and a certain graciousness and kindness to what it means to be a choral director. Because all of my influences, even the men we've talked about have all been just kind of errrrrr! Ferocious personalities. Overtly, the individual, but who were ultimately about the performance of the ensemble. And there has to be that, but I can say that in my 4 years at Luther, confronting me in a very profound way - and I hope to talk about this with Weston when we talk at the central ACDA, the pastoral shepherding role of the choral conductor, in a session we're getting together - my own sense of the value of the individual is changing remarkably. How do you develop that and nurture that one-on-one in that sense of the importance of the ONE in context with the larger? And how does that solicit and evoke a different level of commitment from the individual? And how does THAT influence the sound? Weston talks about getting emotion in the tone. I think Weston would talk a little about getting into the body, mind and spirit, all of those.

Another way to look at that is, the better I know everybody in my ensemble, and the more sincerely they know I care for them as an individual, the more soul they bring. The more spirit they bring to the experience. Whereas in the professional realm, "Here's my voice. I'm checked out, you know." It's not always the case, but...

So I think Weston has mentored people, he's loved people, he's encouraged people in his profession. Again, I don't really feel very qualified to speak to the musical, or to the sound of his tradition. But when I listened to what limited recordings I've heard of his choirs, I don't know that I hear enormous difference between what might have happened at University of Wisconsin with the man who was there forever, whose name I can't recall.

Some of the great men of that era, because I don't think Weston let the Lutheran tradition limit him in terms of repertoire or limit him in terms of sound. I think he was probably, candidly, maybe more than Craig and me, more about freedom of singing, than somehow conformity for the sake of ensemble. Now I could be wrong. I think he achieved his through voice placement, and through choosing the right, "quote/unquote" voices for the ensemble.

Ryan: If you had to define, turning a little bit, the principles of the Lutheran chorale tradition, the techniques of the Lutheran choral tradition, where they

stand right now, what would you say? Principles, and if there are any specific techniques?

Allen: Well, again going back to the nature of a cappella repertoire, which I had certainly done before, but with influences from Don Neuen, I did a lot of accompanied music, so the principles – I think I rehearse a lot less with the piano than I did before. I think I rely on singers being able to read, and read without instrumental support more. I think that we're about listening in a certain way in terms of ensemble, say the question again, I'm so sorry...

Ryan: Principles, techniques...

Allen: I think there's a way of warming up, a way of vocalizing, that prepares people for a sound, I mean, that's a whole other topic I'm interested in, because personally I know the kind of singers I have on large part, I mean there's some average voices in there and then there are also some leads from the opera that are in there, and so I need them kind of where they are in terms of letting them sing to begin with, and then freely engage the breath, engage the sense of onset, vocalize the range, and then over the course of 4 or 5 minutes, bring it to a centered kind of sound, but don't start with that, start with letting them sing. So my old techniques - again I keep going back to these pillars of intonation, the beauty of vowel... and these aren't unique necessarily to the Lutheran choral tradition, I think that anyone would sort of want these in their own way.

I think I'm much more likely, being at Luther, to talk a little more fully about the meaning of texts that are sacred, and to elicit students, what does the text mean to you? What does it say to you? Because of the touring, because of devotionals where students really begin to open up emotionally and share their journeys and their perspectives, I mean it's part of the culture, I think, for students to be really empowered to talk about these things very openly.

I'm very curious as to what my colleagues are doing at other schools. And so, whether it's on YouTube or purchasing recordings... I remember the first time I got one of René's CD's to put in my car and listened to it for a while, and hearing the warmth of the lower voices, and hearing, you know, just various things that they do so well. And saying, I want to work more on THAT, that characteristic. So, in terms of techniques, Anton and I were both at the Missouri ACDA this last summer and he gave sessions and I gave sessions,

and he came and sat in on one of mine and we talked just briefly, or he sent me a note or something afterwards, just saying I think that we kind of value the same things. I think there's an approach to bringing the head voice down. There's a lightness of the head voice, coloring the sound. It's significant that your starting point is not sort of ferocious soloistic individuality, but accessing the lyricisms, the lieder singer, I think Anton would maybe say.

I think I come from a similar standpoint. I'm probably one of the few people in the Lutheran choral tradition whose quite as influenced by the Anglicans in my own journey, but I think there's a similarity there, again, in terms of approach to balance, in terms of a leaner, cleaner, lighter, brighter trebles perhaps.

I don't know that I really work with the Nordic Choir all that differently than I would other choirs, other than I think the things that we value.... like if I listen back to my San Houston State Choir, I think we sang with a lot more vibrato in general, not that they didn't sing in tune, but it was a different kind of tuning.

I think there are times with these Lutheran choirs when it's so in tune it almost hurts. You know what I mean? When it really locks. One of our girls gave a devotional, a girl who is not a believer, not a person of faith, but she talked about just the sound of the choir, and when something was incredibly in tune that it just so resonated with her as a human being. I think that's a part of it. So I think coming into this tradition, if I were talking to someone like myself, talking to myself 4 years ago I would say, these are the things which are valued: a choir that sings with a lot of heart, a choir that sings with connection to the text, understanding to the text, it's not phoned in, it's fleshed out, it's experienced, because we talk a lot, particularly when we're going on tour, about the potential impact to the listener. That is to say...we always talk about there are people in the audience who will never hear us again. There are people who are hurting in the audience, people who need this message, people who need to be comforted, people who need to be challenged. And so I think the MISSIONAL aspect of the choir is probably a unique attribute, unique to the Lutheran choral tradition. Understanding that we sort of bridge the gap between the liturgical and the academic, because we try to bring depth to the academic understanding at the same time, the fervor of the faith.

Ryan: Final thing. Any final thoughts? Anything that comes to your head about Lutheran choral tradition, what's going on here at Luther? Anything that you think of.

Allen: Well certainly here at Luther I think with a choral faculty of 4 people, we have a lot of great similarities and we all have our unique strengths. Of course, two of my colleagues having been Luther grads, sung in Nordic Choir, have that influence, I think. But I think that the choral program is at a really healthy place, and I don't say that with pride, hopefully. But in that it's not just the Nordic Choir, there's enormous depth to the program. I wouldn't think there's another program in the United States which has any more depth than we do. Brigham Young may have 1,000 people, but there are 35,000 students. So I think whereas I wear a hat of Nordic Choir conductor, I also wear the hat of director of choral activities, and to that end, I couldn't be more delighted with the colleagues with whom I work, all of whom are wonderful human beings and I would want my own children to sing with someday, because of the persons they are, as well as the musicians.

At Luther there's a collegialism within the choral program that is just outstanding. I think we mutually support each other. I have worked really hard to bridge any gaps that may exist between students who are in Nordic and students who are not in Nordic. I think it's easy for there to be a perception of elitism which is not fostered necessarily by the people who are in the group, but the people who aren't in the group. So I've really tried, such as learning kids' names, speaking to kids in the hall. I think that atmosphere bridges us together. Certainly the collective experience of Christmas at Luther helps build that sense of shared community.

For people who are outside the Lutheran Choral Tradition it's always a little bit of a mystery. What is that all about? You know I mean, it's kind of good to go back to Star Wars. It's kind of Jedi, kind of different, kind of unique.

I think there are many sacred traditions that come out of different denominations in the country. I grew up a Baptist, there's a tradition there, Methodist, whatever. But somehow the Lutherans were able to capitalize on – again, going back to this balance of the academic and the sacred faith, I forgot what word I used - in such a way that the level of artistry, as well as the level of sort of devotionism [sic], if you will, fervent, was a unique balance. So I think that the niche of these liberal arts colleges in the Lutheran tradition is

that when people come to one of our schools, they know they're getting into something very unique. Some of our kids could have gone to a conservatory; they could have gone to a large state university. I've been in those. I'm a conservatory trained person, a university trained person. Yet, people on the outside looking at us and they see we have 500 people in choir and we have all these touring opportunities and all of that, and I think the kids know what that is when they come here, and they know that to be a part of this is to surrender a part of oneself to the greater good.

We talk a lot about the greater good at Luther. I think that the choral experience typifies, exemplifies, gives life to, is this sense of ownership and this sense of self-sacrifice for the greater good. So I find that the kids, though some of them may resist a little bit giving up the individuality of their voice, they come to love the sound that we make, they come to love the sense of community, the shared sense of emotional connection and all those kind of things.

I think the people who are drawn to this are people who want their soul nurtured as much as they want a good musical experience. And they want to be a part of something that's special that is rooted and is set apart. When we toured the South and wore robes as opposed to tuxedos and dresses, and people saw our students holding hands, they were a bit mystified by that. As significant as the art of music making is, I think it is the common bond through which people of every diversifying world view and religious thought are able to find a really beautiful common ground, so that the atheist in my choir studying physics can hold hands with that music major who is a born again Christian. They can find common ground. And it's a beautiful thing.

***A.3. RENÉ CLAUSEN INTERVIEW WITH RYAN GOESSL,
FEBRUARY 14, 2014.***

Ryan: Can you tell me your background prior to coming in Concordia, of yourself?

René: Sure - I was actually at two state universities first. If I go back before that, I was an undergrad at St. Olaf with Ken Jennings, who was my primary

conducting teacher. Graduated in '74 and then I taught high school vocal music at Presby Ironton, Minnesota before going on to University of Illinois where I did my masters degree there and then I did one full year on the doctorate doing all of the courses that were necessary to be on campus in sequence, and then actually I got a job when I was... maybe 1977... so I was 24, where I got my first college job at Wichita State University where I was doing graduate choral literature, the primary undergraduate choir and choral conducting.

It was an interesting experience because I was 24 and some of the grad students were older than I was, but I was in that position for 6 years as my first college job. Then I went to West Texas State University, if you remember the name Hugh Sanders who was actually ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) National president for some time. When he retired I got his job at West Texas State at Canyon where that was a step up because it was Director of Choral Activities – I had the top job there. Actually I was only there for two years from 1984-1986, because like you, one of the goals I had was to be at a Lutheran liberal arts college similar to the experience I had at St. Olaf, and you being a Luther grad, those are prime experiences in your life, formative experiences in your life. And although I enjoyed my university work a lot, it was... I didn't feel that my ultimate calling was going to be there, so in 1986 when Paul J. Christiansen, the son of F. Melius (Christiansen) who was here for 50 years, retired - that's a whole other story we don't need to go into - but I did apply for the job here and lo and behold got this position 28 years ago. And so this has been my primary position, obviously here for the bulk of my life. I was 32 when I came here. So that's still a relatively young conductor and have been in this position ever since.

Ryan: It's one of those positions once you get, you hold on to.

René: It doesn't seem to have a lot of turnover. These positions don't seem to be doorsteps for many other areas.

Ryan: If you had to define the Lutheran Choral Tradition and what it is, what would come to mind? What would you say?

René: First I would cloak it in the far ranging statement and then narrow it to what I think is the truth of this matter. And that is I think the distinction of the Lutheran Choral Tradition. In particular, maybe in the Minnesota choral tradition, could have happened anywhere, because there are great singers everywhere across the country. I think the reason that the distinction and why it has grown up in such a way, and particularly in the Lutheran liberal arts, are a couple of things that strike me as fundamental and accurate as to why it developed in this way, and those two things I think are the Scandinavian

influence. And when the Scandinavians, both from Norway and Sweden, but particularly Norway, came to this country, they settled in the Midwest, and particularly in the Minnesota region.

What was very important to them was education. High on their list of priorities was education. And so they established schools such as St. Olaf, Luther, Gustavus (Adolphus), Concordia. These are all Scandinavian rooted traditions that in their infancy were really about those founders' dedication to excellence in education. Now, then enters the scene in the early part of the last century, the influence of the man named F. Melius Christiansen who came over from Eidsvoll, Norway and began at St. Olaf, the St. Olaf Choir, which originally began as the St. Olaf Octet that was a part of the St. John Lutheran Church down the hill from St. Olaf, and then in its infancy began the St. Olaf Choir.

Now what they had in F. Melius was a person who had a galvanizing personality. He was a very strict disciplinarian, and a wonderful, gifted musical talent. So he had a native gift. I think a native gift of composition, of performance. He was an organist, he was a violinist, he was a gifted composer, using the language, the neo-romantic language of his time. He was a gifted writer and knew how to write for voices.

So I think when you take all of that and look what he brought to the beginnings of the St. Olaf choir was a discipline. I come back to the word discipline because that's what the choir (needs) and that's the distinction. (Look at) the Decker book (*Choral Conducting: A Symposium*) on the schools of singing. Which are, these traditions are blurred lines now, and actually thankfully so. But the original point of view of the St. Olaf Choir is the extreme uniformity of vowel sounds, clarity, precision... everything was about elements of ensemble. It wasn't about expression so much, or musical accuracy or any kind of actual performance practice. Those were not issues in those days. Those weren't issues through the 30's, 40's, 50's, even 60's and into the 70's. It isn't until the influence of musicology within the doctoral programs that accurate historical performance practice became anything of concern in collegiate level choral music.

Throughout the country, those who were the famous and well known choral directors were people with galvanizing personalities. It was the power of their persona and ability to translate their persona into a cohesive vision of what they wanted to hear from a choir. That was what made them attractive. Well, F. Melius was able to do that by all of those elements of ensemble. Strict precision to detail, intonation, balance, blend. All those things we think of as critical to elements of ensemble from the standpoint of view of ensemble singing, meaning sublimation of the voice to the total needs of the ensemble.

Well, whether you agree or disagree with what he did vocally, he was able to create a very crack disciplined group. All the music memorized, everything very precise. Well, there wasn't anything... at the time he did this, the closest thing was on the west coast to John Finley Williamson in Westminster, which was a very different point of view. There were singing societies and oratorios societies based on the old English model, but they were town and gown choruses.

So here was this influence of this man who brought this precision and discipline to the art of choral singing. Well, that became a very identifiable model then for other colleges and universities. I think it's impossible to overestimate the influence of F. Melius in the Lutheran Choral Tradition. Because it was his students then... and you can trace the lineology of how his students went... his son came here and developed the Concordia Choir sound. Olaf Christiansen, his son, took over at St. Olaf and you can go down the line with many other conductors that I won't name. This became the Johnny Appleseed effect, the people who studied with F. Melius then, and could very easily identify with his techniques, went out in their own schools and, particularly these liberal arts colleges, and Lutheran liberal arts colleges.

And look, what do they have? If you go to a particular Lutheran liberal arts college, particularly as they began and as they developed through the 20th century, these were not schools of music, these were not places in which the operatic style of singing was developed at all, they were not places that were populated by performance majors. These were largely students of every academic interest, including music, often in music education, but also just students who were interested in singing who did not have necessarily particularly good solo instruments. But a choir doesn't need to have a choir full of particularly good solo instruments.

And this is where, I think, the Lutheran liberal arts tradition is born and that is, you can take a group of 75 relatively good singers, provided that they have basically a good ear and a sense of musicianship and empathy towards responding to the goals of an ensemble, and you can create a wonderful choral sound without being dominated by solo voice techniques. And I think that's one of the keys to the Lutheran liberal arts colleges and why this works, is because there is this willingness to submit to the corporate need. I want to be in that choir to be a part of that choir. The total - I will be willing and we still have students who are willing to know what it means to sacrifice for the ideals of the choir. To come in and rehearse an hour and a half a day. When you go to most major universities, they don't have an hour and a half day rehearsals. They never allow that, but that is what I mean by part of the feature of this, being the willingness to dedicate to the discipline of what it takes to become a crack choir. And that I think is part of the DNA of these

types of schools that tend to attract those same types of students. The choir goes out on tour and the students hear the choir and they're attracted by that sound. They want to be a part of that. How do you get THAT sound? Why does that – and I'll just give you...this came out yesterday. This is our tour program from this year, and you'll be hearing several portions of that this year. One thing you'll find interesting is the interviews of kids who are in there and their reactions as to why they're at Concordia and why they're here.

But I think that is a common thread that goes from one student generation to another. And you read about those in the quotes from the kids who we featured in the interviews, is that willingness to submit to what it takes to be good. You know, I just think that's a feature of so many of the really topnotch Lutheran liberal arts choirs. They all have those same things. They all have the same features. They have dedicated rehearsal length, they have dedicated students, they have students who give up other things in order to be part of the choir. So that breeds a tradition on to itself. For instance, one of the things I'm really happy about at Concordia, is that, and I say this with humble grace, but we put up more choral directors than any other institution in this state. One in three music educators in the state of Minnesota is a Concordia grad – one in three. What happens is that it perpetuates itself then. You have former students who are going out into their teaching positions, and who do they recommend their best students? Where do they recommend their best students go to school? Alma mater. What you learn is that talented students will trust their conductor more than their parents about where to go to school if they're really interested in choral music. So it becomes a self-perpetuating phenomenon. I've had to reconcile myself at my age to the fact that it took a while to get used to, but in the last several years I've gotten to the point where I have children of former students who are now coming here. It's a new level of life where "Dad sang for you in 1987" or "Mom sang for you in 1990" or whatever, and now all these former kids that I had have kids who are college age! You know it's one of the functions of growing older, but there's blessings to that, and that is we get a lot of support from our students who send us their students.

Ryan: Could you talk to me a little bit about your rehearsal process? Two-fold...#1- The overall process leading up to a tour and #2 - A typical rehearsal process within the rehearsal period?

René: Well, the overall process I see is one at which I'm always having to consider - and very different from the situation, for instance, in being a state university where you might have several programs for the year, and you're always doing different programs. I have to think in terms of if I start here, then I'm going from here, then from here, and then from here. (*Tap, tap, tap...*) Meaning this – that if I start in the choir about Sept 1st, I know that

about five weeks into that, I'm going to have to have a homecoming concert prepared that is about a half hour of music. At our homecoming concert we have, we feature our top three flagship groups, or top choir, top band, top orchestra. It's always huge – there's more people at the homecoming concert than there is at the football game. That doesn't exist in too many places.

But, so I know that I have about 5 weeks where I need to develop a new choir. So I am choosing literature immediately based upon, number one, how am I going to build tone, how am I going to build the sound of the choir from the first day forward, with literature that's appropriate, that's not too technically difficult, so that I'm really teaching tone building and choir building, what the sound of this particular choir is going to be that year, because tone is everything. I know I'm different that way than some of my colleagues in the Lutheran circle - because we tend to be a fuller, a more tonally responsive choir. Well, that will be for you to discover in whatever you think about that.

Let me just start with that - so in teaching tone and teaching tone building in eight different sections... so first soprano, second soprano, first alto, that I'm really looking for a different color from each of the 8 sections, and that we are building the choir from the inside out with our literature in that first month. So, and then we've got to be ready to sound like the Concordia choir 5 weeks into it. So it has to be a balance of literature from relatively tone building things, to at least one piece that I'm really going challenge them technically on. And then those pieces are going to be part of what when I went like this (*tap, tap, tap*) okay, I'm envisioning how these are going to fit into different sets on our tour. And then we will get done with that at homecoming and then it's six weeks until we have Christmas concert, which is huge here – there are 4 concerts here and 2 in Minneapolis, so 6 Christmas concerts that feature each individual choir and with the orchestra and larger things. But I don't do generally any music that we do at Christmas on tour. So we will concentrate on Christmas then, and then the choir will come back for choir camp 3 days early in January where we have 3 days, and then we are starting in earnest on our tour program, which is usually when I will hit them with, okay, these are the pieces that will technically challenge us the most, and what I'm always looking for is music that nobody else has done. A third set lately in recent years - I've taken to creating a third set that is in every way dramatically different from everything else that we do, including costume changing, movement, thematic differentiation, and just to do things, like this year we'll premiere the Han Zimmer film composer "Aurora". You'll hear the piece today.

Ryan: Michael was saying something briefly about it.

René: It's never been done. And I just was able to get the score from Hans, because he knows Eric Whitacre, and I know Eric well, and Eric was able to get me the manuscript from Hans. And he had 3 different manuscripts to which I cobbled together my own edition, with Han's blessing.

So it's this kind of thing. This is an Anti-Violence set that we're doing that is all one stream of idea and is unique, I think, in its perspective, does things that - and that's part of what I've enjoyed breaking out of is what's expected of the Lutheran tradition. It isn't anymore to just stand there and sing, to stand there and sing beautifully, but to expand every kind of horizon, eclipse, to do new things at Concordia that no one has thought of doing. I enjoy that challenge a great deal. So when we get to January and February, I always say that it's the depths of the cold in January where we make the choir, when it's cold and dark at 4:30 in the afternoon and there's nothing to do but stay inside and sing.

Ryan: In Fargo...

René: In Fargo, North Dakota, you know. So, and that's where, again, I think that the discipline of what it takes to be excellent - okay, and like for instance, this is just the truth of what happened in the last 2 weeks. So we rehearse 4:30 to 6:00 everyday, but my bass section leader for 2 weeks has been on MWF, he calls the basses at 4:00, says "No, no we need more than that", so they know, well, MWF I need to clear that half hour before our hour and a half rehearsal, because Clausen is not going to want to hear us make any wrong notes on this, we need to have the notes in hand before we go in to do this piece. Or if he feels that something is screwed up or they're not getting the right balance or whatever, the section leaders just know. They'll say at the end of rehearsal, "Altos - come around - 10 after 4 - we need 20 minutes on this."

Those kinds of things don't go over well in a university situation where they may be required to be there, there may be grad students who are required to be there. This is part of what they accept as the "Badge of Courage", if I can say it that way, of what it means to be in the Concordia Choir. It means you give up other things. And as Amanda, one of my senior kids - I thought she said this so beautifully. And none of this was prompted, but what I wanted to point out to you for instance here, is what one of my girls...you'll see her today, Amanda, a little short soprano. She says in her bottom line, "When I teach, this choir will be my model" she says. "There's a certain dynamic here. A lot of it is discipline that's needed to create the technical and emotional engagement with the music. There's a degree of sacrifice that's needed in order to sing every piece with all the conviction and precision we can muster. The thing is, we're all willing to make this sacrifice." That says it in a nutshell! I think that's what the Lutheran Choral Tradition is about. She

said it so eloquently. Oh, it's lovely! I just want to love her to death, you know. But those are the kind of kids who make that willing sacrifice. Is this making sense?

Ryan: No, it's great! Can we steer into an average rehearsal day, like in one rehearsal period? Just briefly in a minute or two.

René: What I will tend to do is create, is to map out a week's worth of work at a time. And really never more than that, because you never know exactly how much progress you're making at any certain point. What I will tend to do, is to, I've got my program in mind and it's usually a 4 or 5 set program. And we have a major concert every year for our high school, what we call a high school MPS, a music performance scholarship, and we do a concert for the finalists who are here for the performance scholarship.

What I will always schedule for that is probably the most difficult set that we do on the tour. And say by Jan 29th we have to have this set memorized and ready to go. So I put pressure on them and myself to have our most difficult set done. And then perform it once.

Well, what we did this year is actually the Anti-Violence set that you'll hear today. We actually performed on January 19th on Martin Luther King Day. And so the Whitacre and the "Aurora", the Zimmer are difficult, difficult pieces. But what I put to them is, okay this is what we're going to do, and this is what we have to do. We have to have it memorized and ready to go by January 19th. So I set that goal in front of them. So my rehearsal process up to that point is - I always think that you've got 4 burners on a stove, and you can't keep the same heat on all the burners. So you decide to turn up the heat on this burner for a while because this is the most important thing for them, this is the more difficult set, so I prioritize that set, and then I keep these other burners simmering. Okay, now we're going to do this set and we're working hard at this, and now we're going to bring this at the end of the hour, or I'm going to introduce this piece now. Okay, we haven't done this piece since homecoming. Now I'm going to start rehearsal with this and refurbish the mind. Where was this...

Now in the past couple of weeks, it's been, I need to keep all the burners at the same heat. So I needed to bring my 1st set up to where the 3rd set was. So the whole focus of the last weeks of rehearsal has been the 1st set, and you'll hear the first, what we're going to start with today is the first set and our theme of the first set is music for multiple choirs. So we'll begin with triple choir "Duo Seraphim" of Francesco Guerrero, and then we'll move into actually a single choir, but it's from my new mass, "Mass for Double Choir", was a commission with Kansas City Chorale. And we're doing the "Agnus Dei",

which is double choir, from my mass for double choir. And then we'll go into physical double choir and end the set with Bach, the "Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf."

Ryan: Luther just did this on tour, too.

Rene': I understand that – I told the kids that. And I didn't know that. And then Michael told me yesterday, he was watching it, and streamed or something and I didn't have time – I've not seen it – I've not seen Allen's (Hightower) rendition of "Der Geist hilft." But I said to the choir yesterday, I told them, you know, Dr. Culloton told me that Luther did their "Der Geist hilft" and it's available on their stream at the college. I said, I've not heard it, but it might be fun for you to go and listen to another great college choir and how they did it. I'm kind of curious to see how Allen interprets Bach. But what I've decided to do is wait until we're done touring and sometime when it's not so close to my mind because I'm particularly interested in the music of Bach, and performance and practice that was a high feature of what I did at the University of Illinois. I don't want to hear it until I've gotten done. But I did hear one thing, I knew that he had done my "Prayer" and I listened to that and I thought he did a fine job. I thought, my impressions were that he's building tone quite effectively. Sometimes it's a little square in some ways, but still, I thought it was a fine choir. And I enjoyed his performance of my piece - I'm going to write him a note to that effect.

Ryan: His approach is very different than Weston's. Weston is the most emotional level you'll ever find, and he's on the opposite end of the spectrum with technique, balance and tone.

René: And there's problems with both. When you start to get too influenced by one or the other, I think, that's when you start to run into the lack of judgment of critical thinking skills, of critical evaluative skills. And we all run into it and we need to be careful. That's where we need, I think...it's only a really good friend who's really going to tell you, Clausen, you're out of it now. You've gotten too warped over here. Most of us aren't willing to be that honest with each other about that. It takes a really good friend. As a matter of fact, there's a book called "The Chorus and its Conductor" by Max Crone that was published in 1940, and if you open the inside cover – it's out of print now – but all it says on the inside front cover on the white sheet is, "There are only two things that won't lie to you about your conducting, and that is your wife, and a mirror."

Well, I thought well maybe only one of those is true, depending upon what your wife wants. Anyway, I was making an aside, not important. What I do think is critical is that we are constantly evaluating ourselves. For what we

learn from others, and what we observe in other conductors, what we learn primarily from the score, is that from my particular philosophy, rehearsing, the act of rehearsing goes back to, what is the composer's intent? I must know everything I can about what the composer's trying to say, because I am the conduit between the composer and... It's not about me, it's about the composer's statement and trying to elucidate and amplify what the composer's intent is all about. Now that may be through conventions of the time for instance, that weren't written down about Bach, and that's why we study performance practice. Or it may be, how does Eric Whitacre think about tone? Why does he construct this the way he did? Do we need to change our approach vocally, tonally, chorally, to be true to the music of Eric Whitacre? Well how does that change, then, if we're doing the music of Francesco Guerrero from the 17th century? Who sang this music? Well, these were boys and men in cathedrals. That has to inform something about how we do this music. So I tend to not – and the older I get and the more I do this, I don't like to identify with any school of singing, or that there are identifiable Clausen techniques or sounds or anything like that. It's all about what the piece is about from the composer's point of view. So each piece is its own separate entity, and I don't try to impose in terms of interpreting something. Hope I'm being clear. I'm not trying to impose a personal preference based on the 19th century neo-romantic thinking cap.

And I think that's the tendency for a lot of conductors to say "This is what I feel". Well, that's not good enough. And I think that sometimes we get tempted, particularly when we get to the performance of early music, whether it's Renaissance and Baroque between those two periods, Renaissance and Baroque music... where we're too reticent to say, that's wrong. Because it's not about opinion. There are very definite guidelines of what was the basic tactus in 16th century music. What would have been Palestrina's expectations in terms of tempo? Well, yeah, we can't think, we can't apply a neo-romantic thinking cap from 19th century romanticism to music that was created 200 years before. Pardon me if I'm babbling about this. This is all a part of my DNA about what I'm trying to rehearse, and how I go about the rehearsal. Then to try and get back to your question more about the daily rehearsal, what I think that is about is largely for me is trying to intuit in their minds what it feels like to make the sound I'm asking them to make.

So that has to do with me understanding vocal technique. A choral director has to understand vocal technique of every voice type. So that in my explanation of what I'm asking them to do, I'm thinking in my own mind, how would I create that? And now how do I present to them in as many different ways as possible, because they're all different kinds of thinkers. Some are linear, concrete, sequential. Some are wholistic, some are gestalten. Some

learn by hearing, some learn by vision. And in many different ways, but especially through language imagery, how do you imagine the sound? Because voices are our imagination. We can only image pitch. It's one thing that no orchestra or instrument or pianist can do. We have to imagine pitch before we create the pitch. And so the coloration of how we imagine it directly affects how we create that pitch. So it's all about word pictures. That's all we have to work with. Our voice is our mind. It's really not saying to the vocal folds, you need to move at 440 vibrations per second and create this vowel in the back of your pharynx to create a sustained "A". We imagine the pitch, we sing it. It's a miracle! It's a miracle every time we do it, and we can't explain it. It's one of the gifts of creation of choral music that is so directly human and inimitable by any other type of ensemble, is that we deal directly with the imagination, directly with the brain.

Ryan: What would you say if you had to put a style to yourself, what would be the characteristics be of your ideal choral tone and your ideal sound that you want out of your choir?

René: If we imagined that our choices as a choral director are at 180 degrees, meaning right here is one, and here is the other... okay, at the far extreme of that would be that you could define a choral sound as soloists singing at the same time. At the opposite end of that would be total sublimation of the voice to the needs of the section. And it goes to how I even seat the choir. I seat the choir according to what I call pools of color. And so what my idea is that you sing – the warmth of the sound, and if I could say anything that would be characteristic - what I hope comes out to be a Clausen choir, is a warmth of color and tone, of a natural beauty and ease of choral production that ranges from the very softest to the very fullest dynamics. Never louder than beautiful is my constant phrasing. To have never louder than beautiful. The beauty of choral tone is in the suppleness of it, the visceralness of feeling the Concordia Choir sound, is hopefully a fundamental characteristic of my choir, that you feel innate beauty of the sound.

Ryan: That's very similar to Salamunovich.

René: I commiserate a lot with Paul's point of view. And his beautiful hands. Paul had some of the most beautiful conducting hands, and so what happens is as I get into the conducting, and especially when I'm doing the Bach for you today – I told the kids yesterday, I don't even remember what I'm doing - I'm just dancing with Bach, and getting into your minds. And then we'll change totally when I'm doing my "Agnus Dei" or when we're doing the "Aurora", I mean you have to be much more technical in the Aurora because it is so complicated, and the movements are so complicated, that I have to be left brained. And I'm saying too much too fast, but my choir also

will not sound the same on Guerrero as it does on Brahms. It will not sound the same on Whitacre as it does on Bach. That the same choir will have different tonal characteristics depending upon the sound of the music that we're performing, and I try to stay out of imposing anything on top of that, but only imagining and trying to inform them in an intellectual way, what were the composer's expectations? What was the composer expecting to hear with the way he or she wrote this music? And so I'm a tremendous believer in knowing the score absolutely, in owning the score and knowing my vision of it before I walk into the first rehearsal. Because I think without ownership of the score, you're taking advantage of your students. You're not teaching them anymore, you're learning with them. And not that you don't learn with them every day, but so much of what I've learned to be effective as a choral director is doing my homework. And that's one thing that I try and stress with and teach my students as choral conductors in their choral conducting classes, is, you cannot get away with bullshit. It won't work. Personality won't work. You can go in and tell nice stories, you can have lots of personality, and you can make people cry, but it doesn't mean you're good. It doesn't mean you're good. So, I think it all comes down to, what do you know? What's your skill? What's your technique? How do you make real music happen? Don't rely on your ability to be a pied piper and then say it's good to them, because they'll believe what you say. If you tell them they're good, they're going to believe that. But they don't have the objective standard to say, as long as our conductor feels we're great, we must be great. It's not true. And that's one of the dangers, I think, of personality cult types in conducting. That can be anywhere, whether it's Lutheran liberal arts or someone in California, or whoever. One of the things I admire so much about Hak Won Yoon and I don't know him very much, but I spent a couple of days with him – I think we have really good mutual admiration for each other. He seems to me to be about the music. It's about the music! When you keep your eye on that, all this other stuff that... you know, if you're really good at what you do, you don't need to manipulate. You don't need to manipulate around the edge of this or that, you're just good, and people see that! And that's what I saw, I thought when I saw Hak Won Yoon and what he did, and when I went in to do a workshop with the grad students in there and was talking about scoring and my music and whatever those grad type thing, he's there taking notes, he's there listening. He's older than I am. He's 77 years old, he's a genius, he's a wonderful conductor, he has a fabulous choir, he's learning! He's learning and I felt when I was with him and I see in even in the picture, he's a picture of humility before music in this man, there's humility before music – it's not about me.

I teach my choral conductors all the time, you're either going to be a window or a mirror, as a conductor. You're either going to be a window or a

mirror. And all those who are mirror conductors, you know what mirrors do - they keep shining themselves up because the light reflects off them. But if you look at window conductors, they're translucent. You tend not to see them because the light goes through them. They're only there to translate. And all of the sudden you're hearing music. You're not looking at the conductor - all you know is that you're wrapped up in the music that you're hearing. And you don't even notice there's a conductor there.

Ryan: If you had to name some principles of the current Lutheran Choral Tradition, and if it was a technique, what would you say the highlights of those techniques would be?

René: Principles, okay principles - I would say, and techniques...when you say principles, you mean underlying factors?

Ryan: Yes, underlying factors.

René: Okay, I come back to some of the things I said at the beginning, and that is this submission to the discipline that it takes to be excellent. That excellence, that removal of...what our goal is, is to remove imperfection to highest degree so that what the composer said may be unadorned, directly related to the audience. So, pursuit of excellence. And I think pursuit of technical excellence and the discipline that it takes to get there. Now, we're doing that, as another guiding principle I think for me is to only do outstanding literature. I'm not interested in doing fluff. I'm not interested in doing entertainment. We are about enrichment, we are about sensitizing our audience to the message that we have by doing great art music. I think that has to be a girder of what the Lutheran liberal arts tradition has to be about, is pursuit of excellence through the best, the very best of choral literature and keeping that alive.

Now that means technically doing literature that's going to demand from your choir. That's going to place musical, vocal, technical in every way, demands upon your choir. And that's where I think we are diverging in the Lutheran choral tradition in many ways. I'm not certain that we're all going those same directions in terms of the literature that we're doing. I don't know. I just start to see splinters going off here and there. The whole idea of multi-culturalism to me is a difficult path, because a lot of multicultural music was originated as street music, and originated as call response music, and doesn't necessarily fit into western art music. And that's not to say that I don't enjoy it - and I do. We're going to do the piece of Ben Allaway's, "Freedom Come" today that's based on a black tradition, and I do always do some part of this style of music. What I worry about, and I'm not talking about within the Lutheran tradition so much as within our choral tradition in the United States, is that

we've become too enamoured with multi-culturalism to the extent that we are not seeing that as very technically demanding, and we start to replace the technical demands of education, of stretching our students, with music that's fun, and so I think that is one of the girders that I see is important.

Ryan: And can I focus you really quickly to technique...

René: Technique...so you mean vocal technique, sound...

Ryan: Yeah, anything that comes to mind when I say if Lutheran Choral Tradition has a technique...

René: Technique – what I would say is that these schools are not dominated by voice performance majors. They are dominated by, and the student members of these choirs represent often, in most of them, nearly every major within the college, many music majors, some music performance majors, some music education majors, but lots of different interests. So what this tells me is that an identifiable part of what I still see as the Lutheran Choral tradition, has to do with the willingness to give to ensemble, a willingness to give TO the ensemble, and galvanizing the ensemble from a disparate type of voices, from very average voices to some very excellent solo voices. I think that is still a part of why these choirs sound the way that they do, is because there is a willingness on the part of the student to give to the needs of the sound of the choir.

Is this making sense? This is a principle or a technique I think that is there, is that it is the ability of the conductor to both choose voices, and then galvanize voices in such a way that it becomes a molded sound.

Ryan: Which is something that is the same as from the very beginning with F. Melius...

René: Exactly right. And if I can use that term “molded sound”, you often listen to very good university choirs that may be dominated by total music majors and performance majors - they don't have a molded sound - they're not that sensitive to the needs of specific balance, of specific unanimity of vowel sound, of the chrysalisness of choral color, of creating that kind of finessed, molded sound that simply either they don't have interest in, or time to create. You know, we will spend a long time perfecting a program that in most colleges and universities, you're spending four weeks, six weeks and later on to the next program. So you never really develop a point of view about ensemble sound.

**A.4. MICHAEL CULLOTON INTERVIEW WITH RYAN
GOESSL, FEBRUARY 14, 2014.**

Ryan: Can you just tell me for the recording your background, where you went to school, maybe what you've done before this?

Michael: Michael Culloton: went to undergraduate at Concordia College, class of '98: immediately after that went to the University of Arizona, studied with Maurice Skones: finished my master's degree in 2000: in 2000 I went to Luther College, spent a year playing the role of Tim Peter basically, and enjoyed that year greatly: went to Wynona Senior High School for 3 years - at the same time I was there I was the Assistant Director for the National Lutheran Choir in Minneapolis: and then went to Rochester in 2004 to be Artistic Director of two arts organizations there. And then in 2012 came to Concordia.

Ryan: Did you work with David Cherwien?

Michael: Yeah, is that who you're talking about, Dave Cherwien?

Ryan: Yeah. I might ask you a little bit about him a little bit later on.

Good. So, I'll start the same way as I asked with everybody else. In your view, can you give a brief background of what you view as the Lutheran choral tradition?

Well, it starts with F. Melius and his move to the United States and skipping to the design of the St. Olaf music program under his leadership. This is the Lutheran choral tradition I think is a case of seeds that were sown, you know, and the students of all these great conductors, and in particular of course, F. Melius' two sons, Paul J. and Olaf going and doing their thing at St. Olaf and Concordia. And the students of those fine conductors then being spread out throughout the Midwest and kind of propogating this Lutheran tradition.

Ken Jennings, student of St. Olaf and taking that job. It's interesting that at one time from the St. Olaf choir where Craig Arnold, Anton Armstrong and Rene Clausen who then at one time were the main directors at St. Olaf, and Concordia, and Luther, and their students now going out and getting jobs. I hear that Lee Nelson's at Wartburg. I'm sure that there are students of Anton's who are in Lutheran jobs, I don't know that I can name any presently, but they

have to be out there. Students of Weston's who are out doing things. So the tradition, I think, really from the framing of F. Melius and the family tree of sorts, this kind of Lutheran family tree down the generations.

I think the Lutheran choral tradition has thrived because people who value the spiritual connection of the Lutheran tradition, the value of music in the lives of these Lutheran leaders, I think that as long as we have people like that in these jobs it's going to continue to thrive, and that's good news.

I saw, did you ever see that public TV documentary called "Never Stop Singing"?

Ryan: No, I haven't.

Michael: It's a public TV documentary that was made a couple of years ago and I was interviewed for that too, and there's kind of a nice explanation on that about the Lutheran choral tradition. You might check that out and see if you can find that.

But of course it does start with F. Melius. There wasn't the Lutheran chorale tradition as we know it in the United States before F. Melius came to St. Olaf. A capella singing became all the rage. A capella singing based on the sacred hymns of the Lutheran faith became all the rage. We earlier named about a half dozen of those famous tunes. What are these traditions without "O Day Full of Grace", "Beautiful Savior", "Wake, Awake", the "King of Love", and all of these great Lutheran traditions hymn tunes that become core part of the literature? But I do think it has been successful because the Lutheran conductors have become good teachers who have sent out good students into the tradition, and there are good students who are teaching in places where they aren't advancing the Lutheran Choral Tradition, but they're advancing choral music in the lives of whoever they're standing in front and that's probably equally as good.

Ryan: Going along the lines of Lutheran Choral Tradition, if you had to get into the musical aspects of Lutheran choral tradition and kind of like the style that you hear, whether it be consistent within the three big ones, St. Olaf, Luther, Concordia or slightly different, what would you state musically about some aspects of something that adheres only to Lutheran choral tradition?

Michael: Well, I think that of course, our tradition has a reputation for that straight tone singing. Now, when you hear old recordings of F. Melius doing Beautiful Savior, you almost think if that was today, someone would get fired. Somebody would lose their job. So, there have been changes of course as we've gone through and we've learned more about the voice, and vocal pedagogy has become more important to conductors in the recent decades perhaps than it was way back when.

But our tradition bears that reputation for the straighter tone soprano singing for balancing toward the bass and the alto. Sometimes we've got a reputation for asking our singers to, I guess for lack of a better way of saying it, conform to the sound around them. That's where I think something is really changing in principle of not conforming to the sound around you. It has changed in the last couple of decades and that's fine, that's good. I think that if we were using our natural voice we're singing the most beautiful. If we're trying to manipulate our voice to sound like our neighbors, we're not getting the best out of the voices. And so that is probably a welcome change in the eyes of voice teachers and vocal pedagogues.

If I had to sum it up, I'd say that the Luther choral tradition vocally has been perhaps most well defined as being the straighter tone tradition with balance towards the lows, resonant basses, resonant altos, at times ping-ey tenors, but the straight tone reputation has followed us perhaps more than any of those.

Ryan: I agree actually quite a bit about that. Good. If you could, I'd like to hear you to talk a little about your experiences as a student with Rene and maybe even as a colleague with Rene and specifically his sound. You know, Rene out of the three schools probably conforms the most to the Luther choral tradition, in my opinion, I think, and I'd like to hear your opinion on that and about him.

Michael: Sure. Well, I sang bass for Rene Clausen in a Lutheran choral tradition choir, so we were often asked for more sound. We got this gesture of him rubbing his fingers together as though to say "show me the money", you know kind of a deal there, and I think he likes that balance. His ideal balance when I was a singer I would have defined as that pyramidal balance with basses on the bottom, sopranos on the top.

Rene as rehearsal technician and torch carrier of the tradition, I would say, his rehearsals are based on the music. We know conductors that have based their rehearsals on the emotive side. Some have gone all the way to technique, and I think I would place Rene right in the middle. I would say that Rene focuses on the music at hand and does so by inviting good technique, and as a result of that work, gets emotive response, or emotion. He will not start with emotion to try and steer a piece into being. He will start with the music and I think that is reflective of him as a composer. Not only one of the great conductors, but as a great composer. So his mind goes into the music, and perhaps more than any of our colleagues and conductors, he looks at it from the music OUT. Because it's almost like he takes over the role of composer and can think about it in ways that not many of the Lutheran choral tradition composers, especially right now, have been able to do and so, yeah I would say back to kind of the sound from within as a student.

I remember him using straight tone almost more for affect than for the every day, every minute technique. Straight tone is a color, and I think that Rene is really good about drawing colors from the choir. He will do Bach with one color and an American folk song with another. What the umbrella overall is rich resonant tone that is produced with his encouragement of good singing, but it's a rich resonant tone.

Straight tone's a color. He takes in the audition process my opinion is he's looking for his best singers who can give him a variety of color and do it in a healthy way, and that I think is optimal. When he does Brahms quartet or Schumann, or something from the romantic era, Mendelssohn, they've got a lot of color. When he does Bach, they've got flexibility – the dance. I don't know that anybody in our tradition, I'll call it our tradition, does Bach better than René - I think people have done it very well - but one of the things that René gets out of Bach so well is the idea of that foreground/ background. The theme must come forward and he will work and tweak balances. We were just talking yesterday about “Der geisthilft” and the head motif of the (Michael singing) and how buried the alto motif can be. And so he'll just grab from the other choir – the double choir texture and say “You 6, sing the head motive until this point and then go back.” So he draws out the themes as well as anybody, but he lets it dance, he lets the voices just ride the wave, doesn't drive, but instead lets it dance.

So yeah, he loves a good rich alto sound. Oh my gosh, I think he'd be happy to have altos that were equal or more rich than the basses. Alto colors, one of his trademarks, I think, that he can really get a rich, rich alto sound from his singers.

Of course the big thing is these flagship conductors, they can claim the singers who have that, you know, coming in, not to that extent, but he can work with the cream of the crop from a great choral program, as Weston did for years at Luther and Anton gets to do at St. Olaf. But his alto color is rich as rich as anybody's alto color, I think. So bass/alto very, very rich.

Tenors, colorful, perhaps with the tenors I might say a bit more of the ping, kind of this resonant forward placed ping and the sopranos able to float, I think is important but not the only thing you're judged on to get into the choir.

Ryan: Sure.

Michael: As a person, I remember when I was a student thinking that I am not learning only about music here. I'm learning about being a good human being. We saw him at a time, I was a student at a time when he had school-aged children. I saw him make professional choices that other people may have questioned. He did not do a whole lot of all state choirs, a whole lot of traveling, because his commitment was to his family and to the Concordia choir. He was getting asked all the time to do all state choirs and he would do them, but he could have been out on the road like Anton is, and Anton is on the road all... if you make the St Olaf choir you have to go in understanding that your teachers will be Anton Armstrong and your section leaders who take over when he's gone. Rene just does not miss the time with Concordia Choir. There are occasions throughout the year that he will be gone to do a single all-state choir or a regional festival or something, but his commitment to family and to the home turf is impressive and inspirational. Just saw a man of faith who didn't impose that faith on anybody. He really lets the music speak and whatever you get from the music, you get from the music and it can be very meaningful, but he's not going to be one to say "Let us sit in a circle and let us reflect for 30 minutes on what this text means to you and your spiritual life." There are folks that take that path with a piece, but he's going to be music first.

Interestingly, we talked about a colleague who is technique first in the rehearsal process. Rene, I would say is music first but not to be confused with technique. It's music and what emotion can you get from shaping a line, and you're going to get it and you're going to feel the buzz and you're going to ride that wave, but it's going to be the music that steers it.

Ryan: So by music you would emphasize that he has a big emphasis at the very beginning on the shaping of the phrase and the dynamics.

Michael: Yeah, from the get-go it's about shape the line, shape the line, hit your notes and rhythms, but that comes quickly for the flagship ensembles of these schools with sectional work and that kind of thing. So it really is about shaping the line, shaping the music. What does the music say? What CAN it say? What colors do we paint this music with?

You know, he's premiering a new Han Zimmer piece on tour this year. It was done on youtube by kind of a studio choir, but they're taking this piece called Aurora on the road and they're the first choir to get to do it. He heard it on youtube and got ahold of Han Zimmer. That's a phone call you'd like to be on, isn't it? And even better, he gets to Han Zimmer through his friend Eric Whitacre, and so watch your feet for all the name dropping, you know, but they're premiering that, and it's a very emotional piece of music and they know the story behind it. This is a piece that he wrote in response to that movie theatre shooting in Colorado and they were doing "The Dark Night" when that shooting happened and Zimmer had scored that film. Well, he was just heartbroken that it was a score of his that was playing when this massacre happened. So he wrote this piece in memory of the victims who lost their lives and Rene has programmed it this year on a corner of their program that's kind of from how do you get from violence to peace thing. But I know in rehearsal that it was still about shaping the line, and it wasn't "Let's reflect on the lives lost, or what was Han Zimmer thinking when he wrote this." It still was the music and how can the music tell the story.

Ryan: Okay, can you talk to me a little bit, and maybe even give me a little bit of recommendations on some readings too, but talk to me a little bit about Paul Christiansen's influence. There's not near as much written about him as there was about Olaf and F. Melius, and to be honest, I'm having a little bit more... I'm not there yet with him than I am with...just for a minute or so.

Michael: Paul J. Christiansen was here for 49 years as conductor of the choir, and he was here for a year as a chairman, so he spent 50 years here. His brother Jake was the football coach and there was always the story that Jake was the better musician and Paul was the better athlete, but they ended up doing the opposite job. I think Paul J's legacy musically is one that right now we can look back at as very dated. The sound of his choir was very dated. Harsh. Again, a variety of colors, but the vocal techniques were not so much at the front of the mind as much as it was, how do I get a color from the choir? You can listen to those choirs and you think it's a choir of 50 year olds singing, in the men and the women. Strident straight tone at times. I think that the straight tone these days I mentioned was used for color, but for him, I think that that was the way that you sang most of the time.

Extreme dynamics, but Paul J. was a master teacher and his legacy is felt through generations of students who are teaching, many of whom are still teaching and sending students out into the world with that experience.

What I might suggest is, gosh, if you've got this window this afternoon, that you should go to archives because our archives are pretty rich with Paul J. material and as a matter of fact, I think the family recently in the last couple of months brought more boxes of Paul J. stuff to archives, and so it might be worth a moment or two up in archives.

He was known as a very stodgy fellow - crabby might be the way we would say it now, and a lot of times I think he was a motivator by fear, and I don't paint the rosier of pictures of him, but this is not a person with the same spirit as a Weston Noble or Rene or an Anton Armstrong figure. Right now he would not be looked upon kindly by pedagogues and music educators if he were still conducting the choir.

His was just dated, but he developed a monster program at Concordia. But to René's credit, the program blew up when Rene got here, and there was just a different type of a visionary there.

Ryan: So with what's going on today in the Lutheran chorale tradition, I'm sorry, I'm referring to René a lot more, but also to yourself and your own choirs here...

Michael: Oh, but understand that I know where I rank on any totem pole ...of Lutheran choral tradition people, so I'm happy to give thoughts about others!

Ryan: Would you talk to me a little bit about the similarities that that you see between the traditions and sounds that came from F. Melius and Paul and Olaf that are still current and accepted in what we would consider kind of the tone today in the Lutheran choral tradition?

Michael: Well, I would say that the connections are not many. The sounds of those choirs of the Christiansen's and the choirs now are not very similar. Some of the main differences I would say would be in the sopranos. But the similarities you ask for? Rich alto, rich bass - that more than anything. Letting diction steer. I mean, if you listen to old recordings of the Christiansen family, boy are they crisp and attentive to detail with diction, and so that is still present but maybe not obsessed about to that level.

The similarities in programming might be easier to get to. This is kind of interesting - Paul J. and Olaf were – I have to think about whether or not I include Olaf, I think so, but Paul J. in particular, was a bit of an innovative programmer in that he was doing new music before Penderecki was really being done a whole lot here, he was doing music of Penderecki and music of Robert Page when he was composing more than conducting, and oh I don't know, I'd have to go back and look in programs, but Paul J. did avant-garde choral music before a lot of people had the courage to do avant-garde choral music.

To that same extent today, we see experimental music being done, we still see that music of Penderecki, who is no longer avant-garde perhaps, but was an important transitional composer of the 20th century, getting us into more experimental music. But, I would say one of the other great similarities is all of these conductors have looked back, and historical music has not lost its foothold on the tradition of the Lutheran schools.

Paul J. and Olaf did early music a lot more than F. Melius. F. Melius was doing romantic and Lutheran hymnody would define, I think, him.

Olaf and Paul went back all the way to the Renaissance and they were doing Renaissance motets and those are still getting a lot of, appropriately I think, airtime at the Lutheran schools. So their willingness to look back to the Renaissance era and their willingness to be immersed in new music of our time, I think, is the strong connection.

The music of Schütz and Schein that's the first generation of the Lutheran choral tradition and they've all done it. But I would say maybe the strongest connection between the generations with repertoire is the music of Bach. Bach has not lost his momentum in our tradition. In fact, I would say the music of Bach has threatened to lose its momentum in traditions almost across the board OTHER than the Lutheran choral tradition.

Ryan: I would agree with that.

Michael: The sound/similarities - that can be a short discussion. They're there, but the overall sound of the choirs has definitely and not surprisingly shifted, as we learn more about the voice – Ken Jennings I think should get a lot of credit for starting to move us away from some of the early Christiansen things, and if you figure, I forget when Ken got to St Olaf, but maybe around '68 or '69...

Ryan: I think it was '68 actually...

Michael: Okay, that he was shifting things already...

Ryan: Actually no, I think it would be early 70's because it was 20 years - he went to the '88 Olympics in Seoul.

Michael: Okay, well, so he was there for the better part of two decades before Paul J. retired from here, and here Ken Jennings is changing things and Paul J. is not, so you got two different things going on at Concordia and St Olaf, one is change and of course Ken Jennings bringing in the instrumental element as well to the St Olaf program which is still part of what they have.

How are they similar now among the Lutheran colleges is, I would say that they are all looking more to the global music scene. Anton gets credit for starting that, but I think we have to be, we have so many avenues now to get our hands on global and worldly choral music, that there's no reason to leave the cultures unrepresented on our programs.

Concordia as a college is really looking at "How can we be global like no other?" And so in our music department we have to look at that and say well it's easy for us, we sing music from different cultures and from different corners of the globe than ever before. I'm doing a couple of pieces with chapel choir, and I thought, you know I've never intentionally just gone South

America, Latin America so I'm going to do a set on my tour program. And we're incorporating dance into it and the percussion stuff. This is what high school choirs have ended programs with for three decades, but to get it into the Lutheran choral tradition shows our desire to understand things at a global level more differently and more, period.

Ryan: Actually, that's something I want to talk to you and Rene about in a little while, but that's business talk later.

Would you agree with the statement that in the respect for the desired sound, the very basics of the sound, with the exception of maybe the altos and maybe a little bit the tenors has stayed similar from the Christiansen era to now with the very light kind of boy sopranos that F. Melius wanted - we still have these light floaty sopranos and the more full resonant basses, of course, the bass thing is fair to say, but would you agree with that with the altos also, maybe the slight pingy-ness of the tenors?

Michael: That it has stayed the same, are you asking?

Ryan: Or very similar, yeah.

Michael: No, I'd engage in the dialogue that the concept's the same but is being executed so differently that it goes - that the sopranos - when you heard Luther the other night, and I was just literally watching on those small speakers, did you think that it was pretty straight tone even with the sopranos there?

Ryan: Yeah, a lot of it was...

Michael: I think I would still engage in the dialogue that it's a desire that the choirs can still use that color, but that it's a desire also that the sopranos can move beyond it and show more color, you know we are women, let us sing like women.

Is the concept still there? I agree that it is, that the desire to color some styles of music with straight tone is there, but I think that few if any of the conductors of the flagship ensembles would say that they desire it all the time.

Ryan: Going along those lines then, would you agree with this statement then that maybe the Christiansens, especially F. Melius, knew the sound that he wanted out of the sopranos because, of course, with the *Thomanerchor* he

used boy sopranos, but he didn't know how to get the women to be at that sound, so maybe F. Melius never got his pure desired sound that he would want out of the women. Would you maybe agree to the statement because maybe he didn't know as much about the voice as what we do today?

Michael: It's a good hypothesis. Did he get what he wanted? I think you have to look at the consistency of how long did he do it, how long did he try, and it sounded the same for most of his time, and Paul J's didn't move really from maybe 1930 something to 1986'ish. I think if I had to guess something I would say they found their desired tone and it was born, like you say, the desire to work that male soprano kind of sound. And men sopranos don't have a whole lot of vibrato, and so I think that their ideal sound that they started to come to love and ask for was born of that tradition. But I would say that Paul J. at least got there. I think he knew what he was asking for. Melius was an instrumentalist and...

Ryan: ...who knew nothing about the voice...

Michael: ...who knew nothing about the voice... And that's why I say half tongue and cheek that if somebody heard his tape, and they were looking for a new choir conductor, they wouldn't call him to campus for what he was asking his singers to do. But I wouldn't hazard to guess on did he ever get the desired sound – I would say that he got used to the sound he wanted and stayed with it.

Ryan: Yeah, that's kind of where I was thinking, yeah that's actually where I was kind of going with that, to be honest, so perfect. I didn't have to ask that. Let me look for some of my other questions for you. Obviously, my interview with you is a little different than what I prepared with the other people, so I'm kind of honestly trying to wing it a little.

Michael: No sweat.

Ryan: I did ask this with a few of the other people. If we had to call the Lutheran choral tradition a technique in choral music, I'm not saying that it is a technique, because it's not, but if we had to label it as a technique, what would you label as the biggest characteristics within the technique, and that's something you can have in the back of your mind if you want right now, and think about while I ask you another question.

What are the biggest principles of current day within the Lutheran choral tradition?

Michael: These principles, one, advance the mission of the history in the Lutheran choral tradition which is to say, don't let music of Schütz and Bach die. Don't let the hymnody die. The principle I think is that though this is a tradition that has developed over the last several decades, that we remain true to that which we are built upon, literally built on the rock of the Lutheran hymnody and the spirituality of composers like Bach, Schütz. When you think of Schütz he bought into the Lutheran tradition of Martin Luther and that... Schütz was born in 1585, the Reformation happened in 1517. It was less than..., it was 100 years or so old when Schütz was starting to write this music, I mean, he bought in at early.

The principle of expressing a sacred text to an audience, letting them be moved by the combination of sacred text and music is high on the list of important principles, and/or I think it should be.

Exploring the global view I think is a principle, and this is, you know Anton got guff about that when he got to St. Olaf, but he wasn't wrong to do it. The understanding we can get... I mean this is the liberal arts in a nut shell – we should encourage looking at the global perspective in our music making.

So Lutheran hymnody - music of our early Lutheran composers, a global perspective, especially when you're under the umbrella of the Lutheran liberal arts tradition. And teaching – I think teaching would be pivotal - we want the students in our choirs to be having a good educational experience so that those that are Music Ed students or who want to go and do likewise are learning as much in our choral rehearsals on a daily basis as they are in their choral pedagogy classes or their Elementary Ed classes.

Ryan: Would you agree with the fact that one of your principles is (I know what your answer is but I want you to say it) is to send out the highest quality music teachers, not just in the US, but worldwide?

Michael: Yes, that are open to all styles of music, that are open to examining belief through their music. I know you can't go teaching secular scenario like at public high school and talk about "How is your faith being developed by singing Beautiful Savior?" That's not a conversation for public schools, of course. But if we allow the liberal arts to do their job, to allow our students to

examine their belief system, then they can teach, and they'll find the ways to teach any piece of music that's put before them: sacred or secular, show tune, Renaissance, motet, it doesn't matter, they'll find the reason to do it. So I think really, teaching is a major principle of our tradition.

Ryan: Especially the meaning behind the text...

Michael: Yeah, and not to throw a silly metaphor or example out there, but I do a schlocky love song concert with my community choir I have in Fargo – Moorhead. We just did last weekend, a singing valentine. This is the day you can break out the Kirby Shaw, the Mark Brymer and all that. And I have room in my musical soul for that because I know the audience is loving it and we're bringing enjoyment to them. But we're doing this piece by Rascal Flatts (you know this group Rascal Flatts?) Bless the Broken Road, and that text is a country love song and it expresses how, basically, because life didn't work like I thought it would that time and the road got broken, because of that, THIS happened, and my life is better because of it. It has in a nutshell the tune. And I'm looking at a soprano who got married young, had a rotten husband who abused her, and by golly a year ago got married and 3 months ago told us that she was pregnant. And life is good. And the other day as we were singing that piece, I thought, "This is her, that's the life she lived!" That just connected a silly Rascal Flatt song, but even that, you put that in front of a choir and we will find connections with it. So I think there's great value in letting the experience be drawn from the music, or vice versa.

Ryan: Before I get to that question I asked you before, where do you see the future of the Lutheran choral tradition going?

Michael: I think the future of the Lutheran choral tradition depends greatly upon the leadership of the Lutheran colleges at which it is advanced.

If we have college presidents who want to stop supporting music-making in the Lutheran liberal arts colleges, the road will be worse because of it or harder to travel. If we have leadership who values the Lutheran liberal arts and the role music plays specifically in that, then we're okay. We can have the greatest visionaries in the world, but what I have learned coming back into an academic setting is that you do need the support. The vision of the college still has to support the music arm of it, and actually if there was a body part related to the music of it at Concordia, it's the heart of the Concordia

experience. When you have these great institutions where a third of your population is participating in a music program, it's the heart. How can it be anything other than that?

So I think that my hope for the future of Lutheran choral tradition is that we don't ever turn our back on the music of those first generations of the composers that I've mentioned. That we never turn away from including the Lutheran hymnody. That we never stop teaching our students to just not only go be good teachers, but do it being good people. And I think that if all those things happen, this tradition will live for a long time.

Ryan: So going along with that, basically let's think of every generation. I'm going to give a name of every generation. There's something new that was added to the Lutheran choral tradition from F. Melius. When Olaf came, he changed the sound to a very forward sound and he brought in the Renaissance with Paul, with avant-garde. When Jennings came, he introduced instruments. Weston was a follower. Weston did all that stuff a year or two later.

Michael: That's right! That's very true!

Ryan: When Anton came, he added in multiculturalism. You know, the only person I would say who didn't add anything other than a new prospective might have been the 3 or 4 years that Craig Arnold was at Luther. But you know, Allen's bringing in outside influence.

What do you see in the next 10 to 20 to 30 years that might be the new things that are going to be added to the tradition? If you had to guess?

Michael: To the Lutheran choral tradition? Wow, what will be added? Holy smokes! If I knew what would be cool in ten years, I would do it right now! Be the innovator, you know what I mean? This is the great question! Where do we go? We've introduced atonality and cluster chords – who saw that coming 30 years ago? I mean, at the Eric Whitacre type level, or the warm sonorities of Morten Lauridsen.

We've introduced instrumentations, new harmonic languages, we've introduced experimental music.

I mean there's one part of me that says... Oh, I have an idea, we've even introduced technology into music, and shoot, that happened 30 or 40 years ago

too when people would do pieces with taped accompaniments or electronic sounds and this kind of a thing and that was weird. But it seems to me that maybe a logical thing is more of a visual element to concerts. How long will concert audiences still handle being able to go to a concert and sitting for two hours and only watching a choir sing, in this time of smart phones and gadgets, and short attention spans? Who's going to be the first choir to go and do a concert accompanied by a video?

Ryan: There's an element of ADD...

Michael: Right! So perhaps a visual aspect of the concert? You know, Craig Hella Johnson has done some nice creative things down there in Texas with *Conspirare*. And just how are we going to evolve from choir standing on risers for two hours, to a more interactive experience? More creative use of space, more creative use of visuals - that's going to be my answer on that, 'cause instrumentally? Who knows? Some instrument will be invented that's going to be all the rage, and then people will write choir music for bamboozle sticks or whatever those are going to be. But I think that the challenge for our directors is innovation and how to keep the attention of an audience.

Ryan: Okay. So going back that infamous question...

Michael: Yeah, do that again...

Ryan: ...If Lutheran choral tradition was a specific kind of a style/technique, what would you label as the specific techniques of the Lutheran choral tradition? And when I say Lutheran choral tradition, I'm talking specifically about the schools of Concordia, Morehead and...

Michael: What do you mean more by technique?

Ryan: Part of what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to prove or disprove that there's a specific technique that goes within the Lutheran choral tradition that's maybe consistent, or maybe not consistent with it, because we are branching out a lot more these days, but you know there are still some consistencies. In a state of where we are right now, what would be something that technique-wise that might apply specifically to the Lutheran choral tradition that may not necessarily be involved in other schools of choral singing?

Michael: I want to give you the greatest answer for your dissertation 'cause I was just writing one...

Ryan: And that's a beast of a question...

Michael: Yeah, that's a son of a gun! Because for me, the Lutheran choral tradition isn't wrapped up or born from technique. For me it's born of the spirit of the tradition and those things that we've talked about. To say it's born of a technique...

Ryan: I'm not saying born of a technique, but...

Michael: Define technique of it. Give me an idea of what did Alan Hightower say? Technique?

Ryan: I have to go back to that question again. He mentions specifically warm up's, the importance of warm up's within the choir, which Ken Jennings you know has his book ("Sing Legato") that kind of thing, developing the sound. The approach to bringing the head voice down...

Michael: Ah – I do that in my men's chorus. Yes, interesting.

Ryan: The similarity – and this I think this is a little bit more to do with him because he was born up in the Anglican tradition, the similarity between the Anglican and the Lutheran choral tradition. He talked about, this is kind of also principles, singing with the heart and the connection with the text...

Michael: Spirit...

Ryan: Yeah, he liked to flesh out the sound, and for that I kind of took that as kind of resonant, getting more of a resonant tone...

Michael: Encouraging more ping...yeah, that may be a neat topic for discussion, the similarities between the Anglican and Lutheran choral traditions – that would be a great... I never thought of...link those because you've got those two traditions born out the church, out of faith.

Ryan: That'll be my next dissertation...

Michael: You go for it - it will not be my next dissertation, there won't be another one of those!

Ok – I’m going to piggy back and just take it to another extent. The technique that might define the Lutheran choral tradition... I was going to go to this resonance and when he said flesh out the sound and draw out the resonance. Ours tends to be a resonant tradition when we talk about especially the low voices, but resonance is a funny term because we know that Joe Miller’s got resonance at Westminster and that’s not the Lutheran choral tradition, but there’s resonance happening there. The technique of ... you said he talked about warm up’s...

Ryan: If you want to think about that for a day or two and email me too, feel free to...

Michael: Techniques of the Lutheran choral...define it as a technique.

Ryan: That’s a beast of a question, I know...

Michael: I’m not sure that there’s an easy answer for it. I think for me that the Lutheran choral tradition is so wrapped up in the spirit of its founding and what continues to steer it today, that’s how I define it - a spiritual existence. What’s the technique? Well, draw out the spirit of your teaching and performing and...

Ryan: I like that. I may quote you on something in there...

Michael: You use whatever you, if I give you anything, that’s great. I’ll be honored.

Ryan: I like the phrase spiritual existence that you said. Well, if you would, think about that and send me an email.

Michael: That’s a poser...

Ryan: I know it is, but there has to be an answer, and that’s part of what I’m trying to accomplish. Of course I’m going to define rehearsal technique, and all that kind of stuff. But I want to try to answer that question about a specific technique and if there is anything. And I do think that there is.

Michael: What are you finding?

Ryan: I don't know yet. You know what Alan said that hit the head a lot. I do think that Weston's concept of bringing emotion into the sound - in his experience, it IS a technique.

Michael: Oh, I agree.

Ryan: With others, maybe not so much. Maybe with Rene it's something that comes naturally. But I wouldn't necessarily say it's a technique. But with Weston very much it is.

Michael: You're looking for what defines the Lutheran choral tradition.

Ryan: Weston also brought in the Robert Shaw techniques into the Lutheran choral tradition. He introduced that into the Lutheran choral tradition. That wasn't a Jennings or anything.

Michael: No. Nobody was count-singing like that.

Ryan: I would venture to say that that IS part of the technique now. I mean, Weston changed it to the day-tay-day system that a lot of people use a lot, too. I think that makes the music dance. Luther, I think, is a little bit different than the normal Lutheran choral tradition.

Michael: We're happy to claim them as part of the tradition, but they're kind of a distant brother. ... Well, I say that because we talk so much about the Minnesota tradition.

Ryan: Well, I'm partial some.

Michael: I think that whenever we do talk about Minnesota we have to include Luther – it's 15 miles or something.

Ryan: It's 11 or 12 I think.

Michael: Yeah, it's the tradition.

Ryan: Originally it was southeast Wisconsin. I don't know if you knew the Luther...

Michael: Carroll College down there or something?

Ryan: No, no, no. It was founded... They found the land in Decorah. But there was nothing there, so they had to build it. So for one year they had a two

room house or two room building that was located just a few miles north of LaCrosse. And they were there for one or two years and that was it. And the person who was there was Paul Schmidt the tour manager for F. Melius. Before he went to St. Olaf, he was the music teacher for Luther in 1861, and in 1862 they moved to Decorah. When people say we're were born and bred in Decorah, it's not true. We're really born and bred in Wisconsin.

Michael: You don't want to claim that either if you're a Vikings fan...

Michael: Well, I think that if you are looking for what defines the Lutheran choral tradition, that's an easier question than what technique defines it because that hasn't been stable.

Ryan: Can you go on with that a little bit? What defines? I know we've talked about it a lot, but...

Michael: I just think that for me if you're going to say the question, what defines the Lutheran choral tradition, then I'd talk about how that spiritual existence comes into play in an everyday basis. That we're singing music from a tradition that was born of the church, hymnody that still exists and still connects to people. The desire of the Lutheran liberal arts branch to create individuals committed to improving theirs and other's lives. And that, to me, is the spirit of our existence that defines it more than the technique.

The techniques that I ask for in choir rehearsal, that Anton asks for, that Alan, and Paul J....they're all techniques that exist in other choirs all around the world. What's the magic ingredient that makes these four techniques all the sudden spring the Lutheran choral tradition? Nothing. It's more the spirit of how we've existed and how we've developed and how we've sent forth young teachers and lifelong Lutheran choral music lovers.

I think the repertoire defines us. I think the repertoire plays a big part in the definition of what makes the Lutheran choral tradition. The Westminster tradition is not all about Schütz, Bach and F. Melius Christiansen arrangements. So I think the repertoire...if you allow technique to kind of branch out into the general "What defines us?", the repertoire has a corner in that role, I think, as well.

Ryan: One other question came to mind I'm asking, for your final thoughts...(looking for question)

Michael: It's nice to be recording, isn't it? You just don't feel like the pressure's on to write down everything...

Ryan: There it is. Could you tell me what you see as the effect of the Lutheran choral tradition... because the Lutheran choral tradition, at least in my eyes is kind of the birth of the modern choir in the US. Talk to me a little bit about the effect of the Lutheran choral tradition on the modern day choral sound in the US.

Michael: One, a cappella singing is the rage. You think about ... F. Melius brought to America this idea of a cappella singing as the core foundation for choral program. And sure, there was a cappella singing in America before F. Melius got here. But it wasn't the core. The core was still accompanied singing. Singing along with the Handel and Haydn societies that were on the east coast. So a cappella singing born from that. Now you look at what exists - a cappella choirs in all the schools, or at least I should say maybe more clearly a wealth of a cappella literature. And as we go through the 20th century, and we find ourselves now in the 21st century and you think of what is Morten Lauridsen's greatest hit? "O magnum mysterium". What are Eric Whitacre's greatest hits? Any number of a cappella... "Water Night". And it changed the landscape because composers started writing a cappella music at a greater clip. We see that happen throughout the 20th Century, that composers started to write again for a cappella choir. Which just means it's cyclical, that early music was a cappella, and then we get into the baroque, and the classical and romantic and not very much was a cappella, relatively speaking. But the focus goes there again, so I think that's one of the great impacts.

Repertoire in general - so many people leave and now they're doing the King of Love with their church choirs, and hymnody like that still is being advocated for, but I just see one of the great things is the fact that a cappella singing became the rage. We're well over 100 years later now and it IS the rage. If you go to national conventions - oh, I'd love to know what percentage of the music was accompanied versus a cappella. I would guess it's mostly a cappella, so in that way kind of became one of the most major influences.

Ryan: Going on that, actually one more question came to mind. Tell me about the influence of a cappella music on the Lutheran choral tradition or just in general. The influence of a cappella music, or what does a capella music offer that accompanied music maybe can't?

Michael: A cappella music offers the choir complete ownership of the musical expression. There is no piano to take the interludes. The choir owns the responsibility of expressing the text from start to finish. I think that's a great responsibility, one that will allow the choir to grow. We think about what an accomplishment it is for a 9th grade choir to sing an a cappella piece, you know, or a junior high choir to experiment with a cappella singing for the first time and we do it like it's a canon. But we do it and we own it and there's nobody at the piano to help out with that. So I think the personal responsibility of each singer within the ensemble to think more, to be a better team player (I always say there's no "I" in choir, I mean Chorus), and that personal responsibility that comes into the chorus can bond the choir together.

Ryan: Great - any final thoughts, anything at all? Regarding Lutheran choral tradition?

Michael: How is it not the greatest choral tradition in the world? I'm such a believer in all that has come out of the Lutheran choral tradition, all of the life improvements of young people who get to experience it as choristers, whether or not they go on for choral music careers. The fact that they have at least gotten to live in it and experience it - they are better people. And I just don't think you can say that's true if someone goes out and sings Polly Wolly Doodle for two hours in their lifetime. There's a spiritual connection. How sacred that spiritual connection is, is almost irrelevant. A spiritual connection that can be sacred or secular in nature. But if we are getting to the core understanding of who we are, not only self, but larger groups, that we're doing the world a great favor, and that's really what the Lutheran choral, or again I should say the Lutheran liberal arts tradition is all about.

I'll end my comments there - I've prattled on, and I hope you can use one or two things...

***A.5. ROBERT SCHOLZ INTERVIEW WITH RYAN GOESSL,
FEBRUARY 19, 2014.***

Ryan: Could you let us know about your background?

Robert: Okay, I was brought up in Chicago, in the Missouri Synod Lutheran School system, the parochial school, which meant we were doing some singing, and singing for church services and that sort of thing. And then I

went to the high school, Lutheran North High School. And the choir there was directed by Gerhard Schroth, who was a friend of the Christiansen's. Not a St. Olaf (College) graduate, but very much in the tradition and did a lot of the music.

Ryan: Of Olaf (Christiansen) or F. Melius (Christiansen)?

Robert: Both. And Gerhard Schroth wrote some things himself. And he was also involved in Chicago Lutheran Choir and NBC, I think, in Chicago he did some musical work with them, you know, perfect pitch kind of person, very talented, and talented musician. Probably way more talented than what school deserved to have, the high school.

And then he talked to me and some other people about St. Olaf (College) because being Missouri Synod, one did not talk about St. Olaf and that sort of thing. Except Schroth, who was a friend of the Christiansen's, so that was different from the normal Missouri synod attitude. So he talked to me about St. Olaf and I heard a concert in orchestra hall and then decided I wanted to come here along with some friends of mine from Luther (College), from the high school.

And then my first year I sang in the chapel choir the second semester, and that was under (Kenneth) Jennings.

And then Olaf was really hard up for tenors the next year, so I made the St. Olaf Choir after making nothing my first semester. So I was about ready to not be in the business if I couldn't make the choir.

So that was for three years, and did the touring and then I went to the University of Illinois and got my masters in musicology. Jennings had gone there too, and was the first one I think who was actually in the choral program, because Berger was teaching at that time. And that's part of the reasons I went there too, that Berger was going to be there. He left in August about the day I moved in. So that was interesting.

But there were some fine musicians like George Hunter who was performance practices, did the early music stuff, well, early historical stuff. Historical performances.

I got my masters degree. Then I taught for 2 years in North Carolina at Campbell College, now Campbell University.

One of the good things about the Illinois program is that you had to have some previous experience before they allowed you in the doctorate program in choral conducting. So I got my 2 years of experience down in North

Carolina. Which is interesting because those were the years of the big civil rights things and I was the Yankee down south. It was kind of, I mean ... just a short side track... in that it was the day that I was in teaching lessons and I heard all this hooting and hollering going on in the halls. And I opened up the door and said "What is going on out here?" 'cause I had never heard college kids going on like that. They said "Kennedy's been shot. Johnson's going to be president." So they had great rejoicing. Little did they know that the things got passed because Johnson was in. But that was an absolute shock. I can still feel the horror in my body just thinking about that. Otherwise, we were treated well, and I did a church job, at the Lutheran Church in Raleigh...Our Savior Lutheran. Got some church choir experience.

Then I went back to Illinois and did the choral conducting degree. Did my dissertation on Johann Pachelbel, actually Magnificats for the Lutheran service in the 17th century. And what I ended with was the "Magnificat" of Pachelbel. By the way, Mark Fosters published it. It's like the Bach "Magnificat" in that each of the verses is said separately, whether it be a choral movement, then one for a tenor, then one for bassoon and bass, and interesting orchestration, too.

Ryan: Is it set for 4 voice or 5?

Robert: It's 5, like the Bach. Divided, soprano. It's a good little piece and unfortunately, of course, Mark Foster went out of business and Shawnee sort of lost it - I don't know if they'll ever be able to find it. I've got a copy, but it's worth doing. I've done it with community choirs and high school choirs - it's a good little piece. About 25 minutes.

Ryan: I'll check it out. If it's something I want to do, I might have to give you a call out.

Robert: I'd be glad. I don't have extra copies of it now, 'cause I've given them away. Anyhow, I did my dissertation, then the job here opened up. So I was here from 1968.

Ryan: And you took over Ken Jennings old job.

Robert: Right.

Ryan: When did you retire?

Robert: 2005.

Ryan: So, could you tell me a little bit about your time with Olaf? With him as a character, the Shaw (The St. Olaf Choir, Joseph Shaw) does explain him quite well, but from a personal perspective of what you saw of him. And I'd

also like to hear about, especially his rehearsal technique, in just a typical one rehearsal and like an overall view, like of a year, or preparing for a concert.

Robert: Okay, I'll start backwards here, I'll start with what he did in rehearsals. He almost always did warm-ups, vocal preparation things, whatever you like to call it. He has a little booklet that was published by Kjos, called "Voice Builder", and that will give you right there, the main vocalises that he worked on. Jennings and I used some of those, but we had other vocal training at the University of Illinois.

Ryan: And I think Jennings has his own warm-up book, if I remember correctly.

Robert: Right. Do you know about that one?

Ryan: Yeah, I need to order it still.

Robert: "Sing Legato." And that's Kjos, too.

Robert: Which is a whole different approach. In a lot of ways, making music though warm-ups rather than necessarily getting the voice going *a* certain way. I mean it does some of that, too. Olaf's were more abstract, "Cabre-ah, cabra-ah, cabri-ah", "Dooby-dooby-do" and that sort of thing, scales...

Anyway, I just wanted to tell you he had that voice builder. Okay. He'd start out with warm-ups, and he didn't have a whole lot to say. Now I must admit that when I was in the choir, we had a lot of people who could make the sound he wanted to have without his fussing too much, because I know he had a reputation for being fussy, especially with the sopranos, getting them, sort of almost bound up trying to be a pure boy sound and that sort of thing. And we had, including my wife, in the first soprano section of 6 or 7 first sopranos, that could make that kind of sound without hurting their voices, without them having to tell him, from his view point, how to do it. So I have less a feeling of his being confining to the choir in terms of tone, because there were a lot of us who could just do it. It was a little harder as a tenor because I didn't know how to mix the light and heavy mechanisms. I'd try to get too much of the heavy going up, and that was hard.

Ryan: Would you say that Olaf really liked to have more of a bright ping-ey tenor sound?

Robert: Yes. He didn't fuss with the tenors as much as he did with the sopranos. He liked a pretty brassy bass sound. Kind of heavy. And whether he always wanted that or... he was going hard of hearing when I was in the choir, so I don't know, maybe sometimes he didn't hear a particular color?

Ryan: So maybe he wanted more to hear himself?

Robert: I don't... anyway, so then as long as you're talking about vocal color now, when he sat the choir for choir formation, he said strings in the middle, and then flutes, and then reeds and then brass, from the center out. Most blended and musical, obviously. Then the little bit lighter voices like the flutey voices, then the little bit rougher ones, then the loud ones. We'll talk over the soloist, by the way, who are often towards the end because he had the more colorful, soloistic voices. He did other things too with where he had all the voices work together, and so sometimes some of the brightness cancelling out the darkness, and vice versus.

Ryan: You said brightness cancelling out the darkness and that reminds me of something I know that Weston always taught. Was he a believer of kind of opposite voices often would attract, kind of would work well together, in comparison to similar voices?

Robert: Yeah.

Ryan: I know with F. Melius it was more like the similar voices all together and he always went in between with his ears listening.

Robert: Actually that's what I did too. Does it work more to get similar voices, but then I had to watch, 'cause you could have hot and cool spots in the choir if you went that way completely. So there was also with sound basis, sometimes it was purely unexplainable. To get the perfect combination, you wouldn't think it, if you heard them separately.

Ryan: If I could steer you back to that rehearsal set-up.

Robert: After the warm-ups he'd often start with something we knew quite well or would make music. And then he would fuss away at sort of getting things more in tune, or more learning the notes... Oh! A number of days we'd start sectionals so then he wouldn't do warm-ups those days - we as section leaders would do the warm ups and then the first thing we might do in a regular rehearsal is put together what we had just been working on in sectionals.

Ryan: So he was very heavy on working on sectionals during the choir time compared to maybe, I think F. Melius did morning times outside of the main rehearsals, if I remember correctly.

Robert: I'm not sure about that, whether it was part of the regular choir time. I know that regular choir time was in the middle of the morning. Like 10:00, sort of the ideal class time he got to do his choir rehearsal.

Ryan: Was Olaf as meticulous, or more meticulous or less about the institution of blend than what his father was?

Robert: I...well, he certainly worked at it a lot. I don't know in comparison whether it was more than F. Melius. But it was a big thing. Blending vowels. Blending vowels with Norwegian accent. BEA-You-tee-ful Sa-vior.

Ryan: Very true. So let's steer just a little bit from that. One standard typical day rehearsal to an overall rehearsal period in preparation, say, for a concert. What were Olaf's goals?

Robert: Well, his goal was to have the music be beautiful and perfected enough so that it didn't distract from the message of the text. That was all. We did work on text articulation, but mostly on vowel colors, and very little on consonants. Which is strange, because that's not true of the choir anymore. They do more of the English cathedral thing. Spitting out loud consonants. We didn't do that much of that. Like Lord-dah. No, Lord...

Ryan: That might have been a big influence of (Robert) Shaw coming in, too.

Robert: With the consonants?

Ryan: With the consonants and the counting and all that. Was Olaf at all influenced in his later years by Shaw, or no?

Robert: Yeah, right. I don't think so.

Ryan: So he'd be the stereotypical (of course you know the (Harold) Decker book), so he'd be the very stereotypical definition of the Lutheran Choral Tradition in the Decker book. Would you agree with that?

Robert: Yes. It's a little too simplified in the Decker and Herford book, (Choral Conducting Symposium).

Ryan: You said it was over-simplified. What do you think needed to be added to that?

Robert: Well, I don't think it took the growth of music making. And you know, I'd have to go back and read it. It's just been too long. It's been 35, 40 years ago that I read the book. I just remember seeing it and talking to Jennings about it and his saying that's not the St. Olaf tradition anymore. But how far had it moved away from F. Melius by the time that book was written.

Ryan: Could you talk to me about the transition to Ken Jennings, as the conductor of the St. Olaf Choir? The differences with him, especially in his

viewpoint of the choir, the tone he wanted out of the choir, and his approach to getting it?

Robert: I would say it was the art song sound, the same way you'd teach someone to sing a Schubert song. So with a lot of grace and shaping, and a warmer sound, less concentration on blend, although there was still some, of course. But it was less important, that sort of locked-in sound.

Ryan: Could you define the sound he was looking for specifically within the sections, sopranos, altos, tenors, basses?

Robert: In terms of differentiation?

Ryan: Yeah, you know for example, the sopranos, maybe that light, sweet, floaty sound, altos... I'm talking with Weston (Noble) now because I worked with him a lot. He always wanted the light floaty soprano, that beefy alto, tenors with a little bit of brightness to it, not too much, and of course, his meaty basses.

Robert: There's an element of that still with what Jennings was doing. But I think less... sweetness would not be from backing off the voice. I think sometimes Weston sort of backed away and then got the floaty sound that was maybe a little detached. Not every year. Some years I'd hear that and some years it was more like what Ken was doing. I think, I have the feeling that Weston experimented more with what kind of choral sound he wanted, and explored different things year to year. I think Ken knew what he wanted intentionally.

So there was a sweetness, but it would be like a fine lyric soprano, so it was almost more by whom he chose to put in, say the first soprano section, rather than molding them into something else.

He did like the warm bigger alto sound, and the tenors – I think since he is a tenor himself, had a little more lyric sound in the tenors. The interesting thing I had, is I often had a lot of the St. Olaf Choir tenors as voice students and they'd come in and I worked with falsetto or light mechanism and finding a tenor voice by doing some of the Oren Brown (*singing* “no, no, no, no, no...”) and bringing the head voice down. And my kids would come back and say Jennings doesn't want us to use falsetto. And I said, you know, I finally figured out, I said it's not that he doesn't want falsetto, it's that he doesn't want detached, isolated falsetto. He doesn't want it sort of to back off and (*singing in falsetto...*”and just do that part of the voice”).

Ryan: He wants some meat to the falsetto.

Robert: He wanted it so that it would be hooking in the heavy mechanism into the light. And that's really what he wanted.

Ryan: How about the basses? Stereotypical, nice full bass?

Robert: Yeah. I think a little less brassy than what Olaf had. Again, I don't want to exaggerate that.

Ryan: Sure. Okay, let me ask you then, since we're on the topic of Jennings, the same thing that we did with Olaf. His rehearsal style within one rehearsal and his overall views.

Robert: They did a lot of the same thing. I mean he did warm-ups every rehearsal, but he did more his own. As I said, less abstract ones, and more.

Ryan: How much time did he spend on warm-ups? About 5 minutes or so?

Robert: Probably more towards 10. Anton (Armstrong) does even more.

Ryan: And Olaf – was he about 10 minutes also then?

Robert: It depends, sometimes less.

Ryan: So maybe 5 – 10. And Anton does what, about 15 maybe?

Robert: Yeah, he does 10 -15, I think.

Ryan: Please give a standard rundown of what one day in rehearsal, just a standard Ken Jennings rehearsal day would be. So we have the 10 minutes of warm-ups, and then it's just building up the choral music?

Robert: Yeah, it would depend on where you were, how close you were to performance.

Ryan: Let's just say there's no pressure on a concert coming up or anything like that.

Robert: Well, again, you'd have the sectional business which is part of the choir. So there were...

Ryan: How often did you do sectionals?

Robert: I have to get this separated out – got the right people. I think with Olaf we did, boy isn't that funny?

Robert: Let's see. They did quite a bit... I think they did as much as Olaf did. I suppose it would be 3 or 4 times a week, especially early on. And not on Fridays, because Friday rehearsals were just an hour.

Ryan: About how long were the sectionals?

Robert: Well, 20 minutes to a half hour.

Ryan: Were rehearsals generally an hour and a half every day?

Robert: Yeah. Including the sectional, if we were doing a sectional.

Ryan: Was there anything different in Jennings overall, scheduling or approach to, preparations for a concert, anything different than Olaf, or anything that stands out?

Robert: Well one thing, I don't know how important this is, and that is when we went out on tour with Olaf, when it was a 3 week tour, we did hardly any rehearsing on the trip itself. That once you were ready to go, everything was sort of in place and ready. And once in a while if he wasn't acquainted with the room or something, we'd go out and sing our first number or something, as a matter of trying out the hall. If we'd been flattening a certain piece, maybe he'd work a little bit on intonation on one piece. Jennings did a lot more rehearsing and trying out and rethinking pieces on the tour. Anton's picked up the same thing.

Ryan: Weston's the same thing too.

Robert: To practice a lot on tour?

Ryan: Yeah. Before each concert we would kind of run through specific spots in each piece, just to get acquainted with the hall ourselves. His viewpoint is he wanted us to be more acquainted without ourselves even more than him, because as an undergrad choir things can fall apart very easily. He wanted to make sure everything was just right and ready. Even if it was just a couple measures of each piece.

Robert: Well, Jennings had to work also a lot on making music on these preparation rehearsals on the tour.

Ryan: If you had to define the Lutheran Choral Tradition, and if you had to define it rather than a choral school, you had to define it as a technique per se, what would you say?

Robert: Well, I think the whole business of getting things clean and beautiful to express text. I'm trying to think of the other Lutheran choirs now. Emphasis on sacred literature, sacred text literature.

Ryan: You can also add in the word principles, I guess maybe some principles also of the Lutheran Choral Tradition.

Robert: Well, and tours, I'm not answering that particular question, but the whole idea of the touring choir pretty much started with St. Olaf but then was quickly picked up by other Lutheran colleges, too. So that sort of spread a sensitivity to singing with that kind of sound, with that kind of intention. What else that's distinctly... I think at least some emphasis on the spiritual side, on expressing what's in the text, and Anton has been maybe the most articulate and the most verbal out there about preaching the text. It was important to Olaf but he just doesn't talk about it very much, and certainly almost to the audience. It's more private that way.

I'm trying to think of anything else. I mean, there are so many influences, like as you say, that come from Shaw.

Ryan: And they almost mold together.

Robert: The traditions. I think, well the other thing, and I don't know how much and in what way this actually influences the tradition, but I think part of the whole business of educational institution sponsoring the choir is unusual, and probably goes back to the Reformation, in that you had the closing down of the monasteries, so then who ends up singing for church services, and it's the school kids. That would include people we would consider to be college age now, so it would be very much the same kind of choir. They had to pick up the music for the services, so you end up with, like St. Thomas Choir, which still exists in Germany, Bach's Choir. And I think the college choirs in this country, not the glee club tradition, the east coast tradition, but the midwest Lutheran tradition has some of its roots going back in to the Reformation.

Ryan: What do you think the effect of the Lutheran Choral Tradition has had on the modern American choral sound? And on the modern American choir?

Robert: Well, I think doing as much a capella as choirs do, I think that's one of the things. The emphasis on singing well in tune and with clear articulation of the text, not being afraid to have the expressive be part of what the choir's doing, expressing emotions or whatever else you want to call it in the music, the aesthetic. The idea of going out on a tour with the choir, I think that's very much F. Melius and (Paul) Schmidt from St. Olaf, and a lot of other schools obviously picked it up very fast. Places like Northwestern, which I think dates about the same time as Peter Lutkin, I think, wasn't he? But not going out on a tour with it. So it becomes less influential, if you're doing that (not going on tour).

Ryan: Can we go on to you actually, yourself? Can you tell me a bit about your philosophy for choir, just general philosophy that comes to mind? And

maybe even a little bit about your rehearsal process then also and the sound that you're looking for? Kind of the similar questions as before, but specifically on yourself.

Robert: Well, I'm very much into tradition. So I'm going to say what would be different from what I did. Well, the warm-ups wouldn't be as long because I only had an hour rehearsal 3 times a week. If you're doing major works, that is, things like the Passions, or the Britten "War Requiem", things like that which I did with choir, then you've got to take enough time to learn the notes, so there probably will be a little less perfection in terms of more absolute blend. I certainly would look for blend, but probably spend less time working at it because you had to get the piece learned.

Ryan: I guess maybe since those choirs had a little bit slower pace, too then, maybe the St. Olaf Choir itself? How was the level of the students, say, in your choir? 'Cause I'm assuming there are majors and non-majors.

Robert: Yes, but the same thing is true of the St. Olaf Choir. But I had fewer music majors than he (Jennings), obviously. I'd have a mixture sometimes of band and orchestra people also some good readers in addition to the singers that were good readers. So I suppose if you listen to recordings of my group it'd be a little less polished on the phrasing too, because there just wasn't time. I think maybe my choirs sang with a little more...gracious vocal production.

Ryan: Can you elaborate on that?

Robert: Umm... well, I think I taught them like a good voice teacher, teaching individuals and the part of voice teaching that includes singing lyrically. Not always singing full operatic sound, not that I didn't work on full sound some too, but maybe I worked a little more as you teach a tenor to bring the lyric part of the voice down into the range, so that the middle has a lot of the top mixed in.

Ryan: So emphasis from the top down.

Robert: At least as part of the emphasis, in getting the voice warmed up and started, that you do need some of the light mechanism going. I think I worked that a little bit more. Maybe not more than Anton, because he was a voice student of mine. So was Craig Arnold, by the way.

Ryan: What were your preferences on choral tone? What did your ear like?

Robert: Well, I think lyric sound, and one where you had not any wild vibratos, in other words, people aiming for the same word at the same time, so you get a blend that way.

Ryan: That's very (Robert) Shaw-like.

Robert: Yeah. So if you sing the same vowel on the same pitch at the same time, mostly you're going to have blend. If you have a huge vibrato, of course, you're not on the same pitch - you're changing pitches. But I didn't work...almost never said "sing a straight tone". It's more like you work at getting the blended sound by listening to one another.

Ryan: Would you characterize yourself as allowing a little bit more the natural voice to come out? A little bit more freedom in the voice?

Robert: Than whose? Than Olaf?

Ryan: Than say, Olaf or even Jennings...

Robert: Not too much Jennings - it'd be pretty close, I think.

Ryan: But, you allowed the singer to actually bring out their voice, rather than constricting.

Robert: Yes. Then you get a pretty darn good blend. I mean, of course if you have someone singing really loud and somebody singing very softly, you're not going to get a blend either, or one will disappear into the other.

Robert: Well, I suppose the problem is for the altos is that they're usually mezzo sopranos, and if you work at their voices to get them free and easy and not weight them too much, they're going to sound a little bit on the soprano side of alto. It'll be a nice sound and to be free and lyric, and some people will miss the meat.

Ryan: But that's what you were kind of going for a little bit?

Robert: Yeah, I was willing to give up the meaty sound to have an easy, and what was more beautiful to my ear. But then I may be prejudice being a tenor.

Ryan: And your basses?

Robert: I often think the choirs, you can almost tell what voice part the director is, by the tone of the choir. I think it happens even if the conductor's not consciously working to get that sound. Just by demonstrating what you do, and that sort of thing, you end up with that coloration.

The problem with the basses is that you do need a little more color because otherwise, all the overtones get covered up by the rest of the choir. So I suppose I ask the basses to have a little more color, more overtones in the

sound. In a way, you wouldn't want to with the sopranos because that gets them up in that high range...

Ryan: So a little bit of the more ring...just a little bit more...

Robert: Yeah, without pressing.

Ryan: Where do you see the future of the Lutheran Choral Tradition going?

Robert: It's difficult. It depends on what's happening with the attitude and musicianship of whoever the directors are going to be out there. How much they've picked up from the tradition, how much they're willing to expand on it, to have it grow, to respond to what the full culture needs. And what the church needs, what people's...the individual choir members' needs are. So saying that people are going to be responsive to that, then I think it has a good, strong possibility.

Ryan: As you know, in the past few years, probably beginning with Anton coming here, things have started to branch out a little bit. And then of course when Weston retired and Allen Hightower there now, things are really starting to branch out quite a bit within the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) schools. Of course, PLU (Pacific Lutheran University), Augustana and all that stuff, do you feel that the Lutheran Choral Tradition is going to continue to branch out more, further and further with representative schools? Me saying, Luther, Concordia and St. Olaf, are the schools that I kind of emphasize as the top 3 choral tradition schools.

Robert: Do you mean as far as being part of the tradition?

Ryan: Yes, being part of the tradition - do you see it continuing to branch out, or maybe trying to turn those branches back in a little bit, or....

Robert: Well, I think it'll keep branching out a little bit, but it depends on the director, as I say. I think Rene's (Clausen) choir now sounds more like the old Concordia Choir. When he first went there it sounded like the St. Olaf Choir under Jennings.

Robert: Regarding coloration - I don't know that ... Rene's choir sounds more like the old Concordia Choir than the old St. Olaf Choir under Jennings. I mean, it went that direction a little bit. Starting out with a kind of a Jennings sound, a Jennings plus the old Paul J. sound. And Anton's has a darker color but without over-weighting the voice.

Ryan: Yeah, that's I think sound preference more than anything.

Robert: Yeah, I think so. And he's a baritone. And Jennings was a tenor. And I'm a tenor. We all had the same voice teacher, though. Did you know that? At Illinois?

Ryan: Who was that?

Robert: James Bailey, who just died, just last year. So I had him as a teacher, Jennings had him as a teacher, Rene' had him as a teacher, and Anton. So that would be another reason there were some other kinds of similarities going on.

Robert: He got quite a kick out of teaching all of us that ended up being choir directors. By the way, he was a counter-tenor. You know, I mean, he could sing regular tenor parts as well. But he was quite high.

Ryan: Since you brought him up, can you label any defining ideals that you learned from Bailey that may have contributed to the modern Lutheran Choral Tradition sound?

Robert: Well, I think I was talking about the vocalizing into the light mechanism, and from both directions in mixing the voice, but also not being afraid of bringing in the top.

Ryan: And that might have been the counter-tenor influence.

Robert: Yeah, and he'd say to me, "You know, I sound this way first thing in the morning, I don't have to warm up."

Ryan: That's nice, lucky him.

Robert: Shhhe...right! Well. Great. I'm doubtful!

Robert: I would say it was not the most beautiful voice, but it certainly was free and he'd have you do all sorts of weird techniques and singing and squatting as you sing, and vocalizing from the top down, and he'd say "Does that tickle?" Just sort of very playful. And he'd try to shock us too, being good Lutherans, he'd tell us off-colored stories of doing "Messiah" and having the soprano proposition him between...

Ryan: Between arias...

Robert: Anyway...ok...all right...crazy

Ryan: Oh lovely! Would you agree – you mentioned that he worked a lot with freedom, you mentioned that James Bailey kind of had the influence on the current Lutheran choral tradition sound, the freedom in the voice?

Robert: I would guess, and I have never talked to anybody about that.

Ryan: Tell me about the pinnacle sound that choir conductors are looking for.

Robert: Hopefully people are musical enough that they're not being, what, sucked into, or confined by...

Ryan: Yeah. They're trusting their own ear more than what they used to...

Robert: But you know, this happens even in the conducting classes and people who are out that if they try to imitate a tradition or a particular director, they get in trouble. Because what you usually do is you end up imitating one thing from that conductor, like precision, or do a nice phrase, or look the way that conductor uses and has a full of the wrist and the arm and that sort of thing, and then the person picks up on that and then forgets about being musical or being true to how they're going to be able to make music and express it to the choir to be clear.

Ryan: I do like the fact that technology these days has allowed people to branch out a lot more and learn a lot more and become more versed in various styles and sounds and traditions than in the past and I do think that that has a lot of influence on the current sound these days and I think it's one of the reasons why you have the branching out these days. You know, people are just hearing different choirs.

Robert: Oh yes.

Ryan: Twenty/thirty years ago all you'd be hearing in this area was Jennings, then a year later probably the same thing out of Weston, and Paul J. (Christiansen) and then later on Rene', and I think technology is responsible for the branching out of everything, mostly.

Robert: Well, the recording, especially when the long play record came in, you started getting the Shaw recordings and other professional choirs, and Eric Erickson, people like that.

Ryan: Do you have any final thoughts, anything that comes to mind about the Lutheran Choral Tradition?

Robert: Well, let's see. It's a great tradition in that it speaks to people and moves them, it makes your ear sensitive to as they listen to other choirs and other singers, well, and musicians in general. If you go to a concert by any one of those choirs and they're singing really well and beautifully and expressively, then that makes all of them better. Your ear is sensitive and looking for that kind of sound and that kind of expression from everybody. Vice versa, if someone is doing badly and not paying any attention anymore and not singing beautiful tone and not singing expressively,

then someone's going to say "I don't think I want to go to a choir concert because it's not that interesting, or it's not that beautiful or it's not that expressive. It says nothing to me." If you get that, then that's the negative side. But then you've got the positive. If you're doing the other, then it builds for everybody.

Olaf was not a better musician than any of the others for sure, but he had that aspect, being very powerful, walking on stage. I remember after he retired, when he was my age and older, and he'd come out and he had a little stoop and when he came out to direct, all the sudden he was right that way, just very elegant and strong.

Ryan: In a way just demanded, well not demanded, but just garnered the respect out of everybody just by the way he stood.

Robert: The way he stood and his intense blue eyes.

Ryan: What brought you to St. Olaf? You just heard the choirs?

Robert: I heard the choir - we were given tickets, so I heard them in the orchestra hall...

Ryan: Yeah, I remember that.

Robert: ...and a friend of mine's father was an ELCA minister, and then I had to do a project in English class saying "What do you want to be when you grow up?" one of those kind of papers. And I thought I want to be a teacher, I don't know what area, and we had to do interviews. I know some musicians, I like my organ and piano teacher and high school choir director, I'll just do that.

Ryan: That steered you into the music, eh...

Robert: And as I said, when we began, Schroth was a friend of the Christiansen's, so he recommended that I look at St. Olaf.

***A.6. ANTON ARMSTRONG INTERVIEW WITH RYAN GOESSL,
FEBRUARY 19, 2014.***

Ryan: Would you be able to just briefly, anything in your words, anything you'd like to add from the Shaw book in regards to your upbringing?

Anton: No, I haven't looked at it really, but I think that it's reasonably accurate. I would simply just underscore the influence of... this couple came to my home church, Carol Webber, I think the name is correct in the book, but she was a graduate of Westminster Choir College – late 50's, early 60's. And she brought this belief about a community of faith, in terms of their choral work, should be training children. It should literally be from the crib to the grave, so there should be opportunities for people to sing at all ages. And I would say that I had a very good fundamental training vocally out of that church choir experience. She taught us to sing well, in a healthy fashion. And she provided the framework for my vocal training so that I was eligible to get in a group like the American Boychoir. And that really was a seminal experience as a youngster that really lit my fire for choral singing – I've used that phrase several times – but it was an incredible artistic...you performed at an incredible artistic level of excellence that really, I reached only when I sang in the St. Olaf Choir as I have conducted the St. Olaf Choir. But to perform works – you know, my early time there we did recording of "Elijah" with the *Singing City Choir* and Eugene Normandy. And my last year we did the Canadian premiere of the St Luke Passion of Penderecki. So I saw Jean Bartles, the founding conductor of the Toronto Children's Chorus - she and her husband now are in retirement in Naples. She was at our concert in Naples and she was a chorister with Elmer Iseler and the Mendelssohn Choir, and we were reminiscing about this concert over 4 years ago. It's experiences like that, and while some of those early people actually took umbrage that I came to St. Olaf as an undergrad, because they kind of were still under the impression it was a straight toned school and, blah, blah, blah, I think in the end they lived to see me graduate from St. Olaf and actually come back and teach at St. Olaf, but that these schools were evolving. And certainly the training that I had at St. Olaf with both Robert Scholz as a conductor but also a voice teacher, Kenneth Jennings, and Alice Larsen is sometimes a name that may not come up a lot if you don't look hard enough in that book – she was the conductor of the first year women's chorus, Manitou Singers, for 28 years, and she left a strong impression with me about the beauty of women's voices, especially at this age and that there was a richness, and she always saw the choral rehearsal as a big voice lesson, in many ways. And that has influenced my work with women and understanding that even these young college women can have a varying degree of sound.

You need to listen to the concert from Sunday on the stream if you have it, because I think it was very interesting on tour. The first set, which was the Schütz and the Farrant and the Scarlatti, I think people were expecting or they thought, “Oh, that’s what we typically think of St. Olaf”. And then the first piece in the second set was a Parry, and it was a very different sound ‘cause they had to cut through this organ. And later I think the colors that come out during the Penderecki and certainly during some of the spirituals – you know, you hear them using different colors. They have a limitation, you know. They’re still young singers growing. And so within that limitation, there is still great color that I think we try to explore. I don’t want to manipulate the voice but I think every voice and every story has a different color. And if somebody sits through that concert and can’t hear the difference, I’m going “You don’t understand variety in sound, without manipulation.” I know colleagues who will want to really **affect** maybe shape note singing. I won’t go quite that far. But for instance, when we did Sarah Hopkin’s “Past Life Melodies”, I let the choir sound maybe in some years almost get very raw, because it had to emulate, not imitate, but emulate more of the aboriginal sound that she was going after.

If you were to listen to the Dawson Spiritual Album, you would hear a different color than is normal. Again, I didn’t manipulate the voices, but I did different types of standing positions to get that sound. I allowed most likely a wider use - I don’t ever, and I’ll say this for you for the record, and my students would totally corroborate this - I never ask my singers to blend, and I never ask them to use straight tone, because I see as a voice teacher – and I have an undergraduate degree in voice and I teach voice - I would never want any of my singers to sound like that. When you ask a singer to sing a straight tone, all they do is constrict at the larynx. But what we do go after, and I see when the voice released, you have vibrato – in the United States often what we consider release sound is a hyper-functioning of the instrument, and we weight the voice and we get an excessive flutter that never tunes to the center of the pitch. So I have always seen that vibrato has gradations and I always want the voice to have vibrato, but how wide is that vibrato, is the issue. So when we do earlier music, when we do maybe 20th century music that has very intricate tuning, the vibrato is more limited – I never ask the singers to sing without vibrato, but it’s leaner, if I can use that. Sometimes with some of the Perry pieces, especially some of the spirituals, I allow a wider variation of vibrato.

But I **never** ask a singer... I NEVER have asked a singer to sing with a straight tone.

I think the Europeans would see even our sound sometimes, some European choirs as being very, well, having more vibrato. I have a Norwegian singer in the choir, and this question got asked of us during a question/answer period between some conductors and the St. Olaf Choir. We were doing a high school choral day in Orlando. And at one point the high school students went off with a panel of our students and admissions people and I had about 10 or 12 teachers and I said, "Rather than me jabbering at you, let's have a one-on-one, you and the choir." So this question came up. And it was very fascinating, and she turned to me initially to say "How?" She brought up the thing the effect of straight sound and the kids all started to laugh. And I said, "You asked – what do I say?" And you know they all came back "He doesn't ask us to sound like that. We're asked to tune different things." A couple of them were really, really... and I said "You actually listen to me – huh!"

I think this whole idea of listening in ensemble is something that makes great ensembles, but we don't often do it, or we don't do it enough sometimes, especially in our vocal ensembles. And when you do listen and then the vowels are matched, the center of pitch is matched, consonants and articulation about the vowel on the beat, the consonant before the beat, when all those things... and the timbres are balanced, then you get this effect of blend. You get what I rather think of as... I don't think of it as blend because when you ask somebody about blend, you look at the ceiling on this wall – this kind of white non-descript. I think of the sound of choral tone as a mosaic. And I want to play with that mosaic, but how I achieve that is in the placement of the voices, so that I find voices that will complement and balance each other.

What I don't do, and I think Dr. Jennings changed this where he looked at the voices more as individuals. I would say that during the years of the Christiansens' - I will talk about the Christiansens' at St. Olaf – it was more a concept of conformity. There were ideal sounds that both Olaf and F. Melius liked and the other voices were expected to match those sounds. I think that when Jennings took over, he understood a much freer approach, a more natural singing approach. It has always been, I think Jennings articulated it well and I've continued that and I think my colleagues would agree with me, who do

voice teaching as well as choral conducting at St. Olaf, we see our singers more as lieder singers, art song singers. We don't get big voices. The big voices at St. Olaf in a typical conservatory in this country would be seen as small to medium sized voices. Most of our Lutheran schools don't get the big opera voices. They won't go to St. Olaf, or a Concordia or a Luther because they want to be big opera singers. Have we produced? Yes. Luther has through the Dorian Program, an opera program has produced. We have a number of our singers... I heard a month ago two of our graduates, both who sang at different points in St. Olaf Choir, on Met broadcasts. So they've gone on to wonderful careers. But that's not an issue of why they're going to choose a St. Olaf. I think they choose St. Olaf because they know they will get a first rate education, one of the finest in the nation. And especially the non-majors can be part of a choral program even if they are not a music major. Or a voice major, in fact.

I would say to you ... I want to come back to this issue of vocal technique because it's this lieder approach where the text is also important. It's not just sound coming at us, but the handling of text, and especially in a community which is based, where we regard ourselves still as a community of faith, a college of the church, and that we do so much music of the church. I don't want to just say sacred music. It's music that reflects a perspective. The importance of communicating that text is of utmost priority to me in performance.

So I think as we go through there what I am always looking at is that each piece has a story to tell and how can we find the appropriate communication of the text and the music. And there will be times when I think the sound, the tone of the choir has to reflect certain... you know, I don't want "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" or "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" to sound like Farrant or Palestrina. It has to have.

If someone says that, then I would respectfully disagree that they are not listening, or they have come with preconceived notions of what these choirs should sound like.

And I do think that each of, you know, especially, let's just put it blanketly, I think Luther College Nordic Choir, Concordia Choir and St. Olaf Choir are, of the Lutheran college choirs, still are the preeminent choirs in terms of their

touring, their history, what they do. There's a level of excellence these three choirs achieve.

Both René Clausen and I are graduates of St. Olaf. We have been influenced certainly by Ken Jennings. Weston Noble has said this to me personally, that he was influenced not only in the programming that the St. Olaf Choir did, but in the sound, in the tonal release of the St. Olaf Choir.

Certainly when Craig Arnold followed him, Craig Arnold was at St. Olaf with me and kind of bridged the gap between René Clausen's time and my time. René and I are 4 years apart in age. And so he brought THAT through to his leadership of that program. And Allen Hightower brings a different background, but a complementary background in some senses, and I think is beginning to understand better the nature of this midwestern Lutheran milieu and is bringing his own distinctive realm to it. René and I have grown. We are very much influenced by what we learned here as an undergraduate, and we have at one point the same similar graduate training at University of Illinois. I also had other perspectives brought to me from Michigan State and then where I taught before I came to St. Olaf. The same thing with René. You know, he taught in Texas. There were different voices in Texas. And so he brings all of that. And then we've grown these last 20 or 30 years in our own work and who and how we work with professional singers. As I worked around the world and you hear different types of ways of making music and creating choral... well, different complexions of choral sound that's possible. And yet I always have to respect the singers that I'm working with. I have to respect that they're 19 to 22 year old singers. I ask the most of them, but I also reject that they should start to sound like they are 28 and 30 and 35 years old. And sometimes we have to be careful that we don't try to AFFECT these singers. And I think that as a teacher of voice, that keeps me honest in a way. That keeps me really honest in a way, as a choral conductor.

Ryan: Since you kind of led us there, with the René Clausens', and well, not so much Allen, but let's go back with more of Westons'. How would you rate yourself and the St. Olaf Choir, as...not in quality obviously, but in terms of similarities and differences?

That could be the choral tone, or yourself as the conductor...

Anton: No, I mean, we're different people. I have great respect and I have a personal friendship certainly with Rene. An even closer one with Craig Arnold. And I have to bring Craig Arnold into it because Craig Arnold, in those 5 years he was there, he actually, I think, took the Nordic Choir to a different level. Craig himself was a singer, more of a singer than Weston. I think Weston would be very clear to indicate that. And I think what he was able to... everyone loved and loves Weston Noble. But what Craig's leadership and type of leadership was, was really demonstrating that the Nordic Choir could stand on its own despite, IN SPITE and not needing a beloved leader as they had in Weston. The Concordia Choir went through a little bit of this at the end of Paul Christiansen's tenure. If you would see, this never happened with Luther, but you could see some of the things from the late 70's, or early 80's that literally said Paul Christiansen's Concordia Choir. The St. Olaf Choir has never been. If it was ever seen like that during F. Melius' time, certainly by Olaf's time it had waned and by the time Kenneth Jennings took over the St. Olaf Choir, it was the St. Olaf Choir. We are stewards of tradition. It is not my choir. I see myself, and I believe I can speak for Dr. Jennings, we see ourselves as stewards of this great instrument, this great legacy, and we work at our hardest to produce music of integrity, of great art, one that reflects our mission of faith and one that can stand to the highest educational and artistic standards. I think that my colleagues in these other choirs do the same. Rene brings, he is a different perspective as a composer and so he can bring that. We have different tastes maybe in tonal coloring. But I think that it's not one is not good, or one is better. It's, you know "Do you like white wine, do you like red wine?"

Ryan: No, I'm not asking which one's better.

Anton: No, but I'll be honest with you, you're asking me, do you do this sort of comparison? I think it is a matter of different palates, of different tastes. I think, what I look at is more of what we share in common than how we differ. And I think this adherence of a core repertoire - and we both have branched out to do non-sacred music. We're both educators. We'll see if that happens a bit more at Luther, but I know that if I speak to Concordia and say there have been years he's done some things depending upon where they're touring, I've done some things based upon where I'm touring. I mean, "Past Life Melodies" has nothing to do with religion, and there have been other pieces that I have done over the years - when I did the "Serenade to Music", Vaughn

Williams two years ago. I mean, there are pieces we've done because they're great pieces of art and maybe I'm affected, been impacted by those tenures at Calvin College, when if you really take reform theology, God is God of all creation. There is not sacred and secular. And I actually view it that way. And while I'll recognize that there are texts that are not necessarily religious than other texts, to me, it all comes from the same creator.

Ryan: I like that a lot. Can you just briefly in say a minute or so, just explain your preference for choral tone?

Rene: I want a released, healthy vocal sound. I do not want anything that is held. And so when I'm looking, when I come back, my best models for that are the great lieder singers. So I think of Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Elly Ameling and I look at a singer such as Leontyne Price, who while she sang, was known for her great artistry as an opera singer, she spent as much time through her career, certainly in her last 15 years or so singing, as an art song singer. I look for those people where it's beauty of sound. Sound - and this is where I'll come back maybe reflecting the impact with Shaw - sound should not be the only criteria for evaluating great singing. It is a beginning point. But then, how does the sound of the singer sound to the choir? How does that bring flesh to the composition? What I try to do, what I strive to do with these singers I work with, is that we look at each piece. And what does that composer need from us to recreate that piece with integrity? I don't know about authenticity. I don't have little boys in the St. Olaf Choir. I don't want my women to sound like little boys, as a voice teacher. But I do want them to reflect a sensibility to how the piece should be performed, what the text brings to it.

Quite frankly, with a piece like Parry, which I was glad which we were doing this year, I'd much rather hear female altos, because when they go into that middle to lower register, they can cut through it in a way that sometimes the counter-tenors can't. And there's a flesh and blood that I want to be able to hear, so I want a sound that is honest. And honest to the ages of the singers, and it's honest to the music and the text that we're trying to recreate. I strive for integrity in what we do. Not authenticity, because I don't know anything about being a person who's been whipped. I'm African American, but I haven't been whipped - I haven't had to pick cotton. I have had as a very young child in the American Boychoir, I remember one of my first tours to the

south, where I could not use the same bathroom as the other boys. So I do understand some of that aspect. But also what I found in doing, say the music of the African American, the spiritual – gospel music – that has to be, especially the spiritual, is a universal song about the human condition. So I've done those pieces in Sweden, I've done those pieces in Latin America, I've done those pieces in Israel. I've done them literally around the world. And all the sudden, they're no longer black people's music, or even American music, they're a universal song.

And so what I want to bring in the singing, and coming back to your question, I want a healthy release sound that allows me as much variety as possible, to reflect what the composition needs. There's your sound bite. But you need to know where it's coming from.

Ryan: Changing gears just a tiny bit, if you had to define the Lutheran choral tradition today, what you would think about the Lutheran choral tradition today, rather than the F. Melius, the Olaf time, even the Jennings time, what would you say?

Anton: Well, I still think we're steeped in tradition. And when I look at, if I go out beyond Luther, St. Olaf and Concordia, when I look at some of the other Lutheran colleges, just in the upper Midwest, it's still... we may venture to do more non-sacred music, it's still a tradition that adheres to a beauty of sound. It's a tradition that adheres to nuance in music making both in terms of textual articulation in terms of shaping of phrase, in terms of dynamics. It's a tradition that still values the essence of what it means to make music in ensemble, rather than being the individual. I think if you had been in that session in Orlando you would have heard – this is when I said that they actually listened to me – what I ask my students to be are intelligent soloists. I want them to be able to utilize all the colors of their voices. I don't want choir singers who just kind of sing this white, empty sound. But when I need a leaner, possibly more innocent type of sound for a type of piece, I need them to be able to find it. When I need a piece that has to be more robust, full bodied in nature - I need them to be able to find that. That's what a great soloist is for me. That's why Leontyne Price could sing a Handel aria, and then go and sing a Strauss lieder, and then go sing a gentle song, and then end up with a spiritual. And that's what I want. And that's where a lot of opera, people who just do opera can't do it. They're worried about cutting through

an orchestra. The size of the voice. I want that sense of singer who can elicit the meaning of the text and music together. And I think that's what's starting to happen. Our Lutheran choirs are still are very much grounded in a tradition of expressive, beautiful music making. Music that still comes from a point of view, grounded in faith, and I think when our Lutheran choral tradition is at its best, it sets out not to entertain. It sets out to transform the performer and the listener. And I think that's a key element because our art is then in service to others, rather than "Come look at me. See how great I am." But it's about how our art can serve others.

Ryan: That's nice.

Anton: I would also say that, and I'm going to take some degree of credit here, I'm not going to blow my own horn too many times with you. But, before I came to St. Olaf, most St. Olaf choirs, Concordia, Luther, they were all doing some spirituals. Paul J. did them as well as any black man that I know. Paul Christiansen could interpret a spiritual incredibly well. He understood it as folk music. And that was an essence I think of his genius. F. Melius never did a spiritual in his life and if you go back and start doing some reading and you read my dissertation, my doctoral monogram, I count why he didn't do it. Olaf did in 27 years, one spiritual. In 1955 he did Harry Burleigh's "Deep River" when they went to Scandinavia and to Germany. Ken Jennings was broader than that, he had a small collection of spirituals that he did. My very first Sunday conducting the St. Olaf Choir in 1990, we sang "O Day Full of Grace" as the offertory anthem, a wonderful Scandinavian hymn by F. Melius. We did a plain song chant on "Adoro Te" for the Eucharist, and the descending hymn was "Hallelujah Pelo Tsa Rona" with drums. Nobody was doing, none of the major Lutheran colleges at the time were doing any of the South African freedom songs. They were just starting to come to the forefront. But in a sense when St. Olaf did it, it gave permission for others. No other choir was doing...yeah, Weston 3 or 4 years later did Byron Smith, "Worthy to Be Praised". I did it in 1991, 1992. Was doing André Thomas "Go Where I Send Thee" which was more of a gospel spiritual. So I think in that way we opened the door with some of this literature. And now we are all much more inclusive about being global on our expressions. And global beyond just the art music. I mean, seeing folk music as worthy to be done by these choirs. There was some of that. But I think we have all broken out of that realm. But I will take some claim that it wasn't being done

a whole lot before I came to St. Olaf and we were really breaking. Ken Jennings did some when he took the choir to the Orient and I know when they go to Scandinavia you might get some of that. But, I mean, not going to certain countries so that we are going to do some of that... I mean, incorporating it as part of our regular singing experiences. And I think we have all moved in that direction in a wonderful way.

Ryan: Can you talk to me a little bit about – I have 3 questions – of course, if something comes up. Can you talk to me about the effect of your voice teacher at Illinois, James Bailey? I've heard a lot about him and some of his off-color comments, and what-not...

Anton: He taught Rene, he taught Bob Schultz, he taught Ken Jennings.

Ryan: He taught all of you guys...

Anton: He said "I taught you all, you Lutheran types."

Ryan: So I'm actually curious on the effect he had on the sound that you envisioned, because obviously there's a big sound in this contemporary Lutheran choral tradition and everybody comes from the some teachers.

Anton: Yep! You've hit a point. And Bailey was about Bel Canto. He was all about Bel Canto. So was Ken Jennings, so was Bob Scholz, and I think that was an influence on us. But it was always beautiful, even in his demonstration in lessons. You know, he would say something, but he still demonstrated it, I had him when he must have been in his – he just died this May – and I had him when he had to be in his 60's. He still could sing beautifully. I used to have lessons at 9:30 in the morning on Monday. He was honest in what he did. He was Jerry Hadley's teacher, by the way – great tenor. He was Jerry Hadley's teacher. But I think Bailey, he maybe with some of my colleagues... yeah, I sometimes go back to bodily functions a lot sometimes when I'm working with singers. And while Scholz yeatried to prepare me for him, no one could...he was a unique character. But after the shock factor, what he helped me to understand was that singing is a natural bodily function and to be able to relate it back to how the rest of our body works. Because for me, what I'll tell you what I took from Bailey's teaching, always beautiful singing, always artistic, always expressive singing. Whether you were singing as an individual, whether you're singing in an ensemble. Bailey also helped me to understand something – he said beautiful singing is

beautiful singing, he said. And I know my students – I do not agree – I have my choir voice and my solo voice – I need to go that route - you're going to get vocally schizophrenic. I think you might adapt your technique some when you play in ensemble. You know, what a solo violinist might do versus when they play in chamber music versus when you're playing full orchestra. They have to adapt but the basic way they bow doesn't change. Basically, they may have to do more in terms of volume or articulation. Singers get into this whole thing of, I've gotta do this voice and that to me, creates an unnecessary tension in teaching of singing. And I think in that way, again in the Lutheran choral tradition when it's practiced at its best, has been a healthy approach to singing. And I think someone like James Bailey, who didn't sit there and talk to me about being a choir singer and a soloist, he said "I want you to be a healthy singer. I want you to handle words with great expression."

When I was starting to prepare the Aaron Copland Early American songs, he said I'm going to send you down to Chris William Warfield, whose those pieces were written for - was teaching on the faculty. He said, you're going to go down to Dr. Warfield and you're going to coach with him, and then come back to me. And so, what Bailey also taught me was that he didn't pretend to know everything, and that he respected his colleagues, and even though there's sometimes tension in certain areas of the school of music when I was there and I think other people can say that in earlier times, there was always a respect at least between Harold Decker and James Bailey. James Bailey never talked, in my presence, ill of Harold Decker or choral singing. He just said, "I want you to be an expressive singer and a healthy singer", and that's what I garnered from him, and that's what I've tried to do in my own teaching, whether as a private voice teacher or as an ensemble conductor.

Ryan: Are there any writings out – I haven't been able to find on James Bailey, on his teaching or anything like that?

Anton: Some people talk about it. You know, we have established teachers who were very...Mr. Miller, Professor Miller at Oberlin, you know, who wrote about his pedagogy and such. But Jim Bailey was one who was just a wonderful singer and he taught, and he taught well. If anything, he poured all the energies rather than into writing a book, he poured it into us, his students.

Ryan: Because I find that topic of Bailey very interesting because I think there's a huge connection between the sound today and him. I'm also finding

another interesting aspect between the comparisons of the Anglican sound versus the Lutheran choral tradition too, but that's another topic.

Can you talk to me briefly about the importance of depth within your singers? Within the colleges? I'm finding an idea that with all these – Luther has 8 choirs, St. Olaf has I think, what, 7 choirs, you have?

Anton: We have 8.

Ryan: You have 8? And similar, Concordia, and obviously that idea of depth, I think, is a very important factor...

Anton: So depth of program...okay, now I know what you're talking about. Just so you know, we have 6 auditioned choirs, 2 non-auditioned. I think those two non-auditioned are as important as the 6 auditioned. And I direct one of the non-auditioned choirs, Collegiate Chorale. There's 100, depending on the semester, between 100 and 120 voice women's chorus, and we have a gospel choir.

I think the depth points to the foundation and the real strength of the program. There's not just one great choir. And none of these choirs – we go to look at those touring choirs, especially at St. Olaf, at Luther, but I'd also say that if you look at Gustavus here, if you look at other programs around the country, some of the stronger Lutheran programs, in some of those cases, there's only one, there's a top touring choir and there may be...I hate the term "feeder", I don't like it in any way, but there may be other choirs that are more preparatory in getting to that. I think at these three large schools especially, in some degree I think Gustavus could be also be said in that way, and I think people like Paul Torkelson, well, James Fritschel first, and Torkelson, and Lee Nelson at Wartburg are building choirs so that first of all, the entire community is served. That to me is the first thing. I think the thinking has changed. We have this choir so that it feeds in and makes a concert choir, the touring choir especially - NO. At St. Olaf it has certainly evolved in my 24 years there and it began really when people like John Ferguson came to St. Olaf and he inherited a choir that was kind of seen as the "leftovers". That's what the old Campus Choir was which morphed into Cantorei. And one of the things that John did was, we can't be in a pecking order anymore. We have to establish these choirs with their own unique functions. So yes, at St. Olaf College, the St. Olaf Choir is the flagship choir, is the touring choir. But the

Chapel Choir has many wonderful singers. I think maybe a bit different than my colleagues in the other two schools. St. Olaf sends out the largest number of students of any undergraduate institution to study abroad in the country – it's been number one in that category for 4 or 5 years. It's been at the high level since I came. The last 4 or 5 years there've been studies and we have been named number one.

When I came, Dr. Jennings expressed a frustration that – he says, this is different than when you were here in the 70's where students will come and they'd sing for one year and they'd want to travel, and they might come back, or, he'd have them for two years and just when they were vocally getting seasoned, they'd take off to travel. So I made the decision early in my tenure to tell to go, especially the first year choirs, travel first and then apply for the St. Olaf Choir. And I know that international travel is a strong magnet for kids coming to St. Olaf. Concordia and Luther send and our other schools send out, but maybe not to the degree we do. And so there a lot of students who are really serious – they really want to do the travel/study abroad. So there are a lot of singers.

Sometimes my spring auditions in the last five, ten years have gotten a little scary because in the early years when I didn't quite do that, everybody would come and I'd get usually some of the very best voices, but I had some of these kids doing what Jennings warned me about. And I thought, this is too unstable. It's too unstable. I also found that when some of those kids were in the choir for 3 years, by their 3rd year they were getting kind of jaded. And I don't think I'd be alone if I asked René, and if I asked Weston, or now Craig or now Allen, yeah, they'd just, you know... kind of a... You get the choir geeks, they're going to be fine. But the average kid, it's a lot to give up for 3 years. So I had more first year choir members in the St. Olaf Choir in the last 10-12 years who were seniors. But it makes my fall a little bit more challenging - sometimes their learning process if they're not used to working at that level, that intensity. But certainly by Christmas festival and certainly by the time we go off on tour, what I gained in return, are people who, this is their only year. They're not going to mess around in terms of behavior. They're much more focused and they come with it already 2 or 3 years of wonderful training in the other choirs. So I get seasoned musicians, I get good musicians, I get people who are committed, and they can balance off some of my longer term members who are starting to get a little jaded. And these

ensembles, because they also tour, we maybe tour the longest, slightly longer than maybe the other two choirs, because we're out 16, 17 days. That makes a big difference in our ability to come back and be fresh and be able to share equally with that. So I do think at that point what you see in the other choirs - because I'm not just taking the very best - you see a depth in each of those choirs. The fact that at some of the other places who do a work, like "War Requiem", they have to put all the choirs together. My colleague Christopher Aspaas could do that, and with Bob Scholz for years, did that just with the Chapel Choir. Bob last year said, "Take the St. Olaf Choir - give you a little more beef to do that with." And last year when Christopher Aspaas did that with the Chapel Choir, he was then conducting Magnum Quorum, started out as a St. Olaf Alumni Choir, has broadened out to include other people, and especially a lot of (?) and folks from Luther, but he combined that 50 voice choir with his 110 voice choir. But those choirs can function on their own and function beautifully, and they do. And I think that to me, I don't recruit people to come to sing in the St. Olaf Choir. I recruit them to come to St. Olaf College, and should they want to make that sacrifice of time and effort, and they have the abilities, yes, there's a choir at that level, but I know they're going to be fed. In truth, I ended up finally choosing St. Olaf College to attend as a student, not because of the St. Olaf Choir. It was because of Chapel Choir conducted by Bob Scholz. The day I came to visit St. Olaf, St. Olaf Choir was finishing its two week period - we always give them two weeks off after tour because they've missed a week of classes. They were starting to meet that afternoon to work on the Mozart "Requiem". They were going to be singing, this is 1974 with the Minnesota Orchestra. It was too late in the day for me to hear them, so I went to hear Chapel Choir and they were preparing "St. Matthew Passion". And I was also singing in the community chorus in Long Island where I grew up, doing that. I went and heard that choir. I had heard the St. Olaf Choir in NY - it was Jennings' first tour in 1972. They were very impressive. But it was that Chapel Choir - they were so good! I remember my oldest brother taking me out to visit Capital University and St. Olaf. I said "You know, I don't know if I can make that purple choir, but these choirs are really great. I could be really happy here."

And so I think, and sometimes even now, for instance, our big kind of scholars music, scholars weekend, happens this year when the St. Olaf Choir is still on that post-tour break. And sometimes we got a little hassle from the admissions people, I say, "But you don't have to sell this place on one choir." This is the

strength of the program. And I think our sister schools have seen that. And I think that's what we offer. And it's the multi-perspective. I think that's the great thing. What major do you go in and just have one person all the time? I think to have 2 and 3 conductors during your time, especially if you're going to be a music educator. Of any type, whether it's church musician, or school musician or whatever. To get 2 or 3 different perspectives I think is a really valuable thing.

Ryan: Can you talk to me in regards to the choir, your expectations for commitment to the St. Olaf Choir?

Anton: Well, this is why I mentioned to you before about that I want them to travel first. I want a commitment. I want to know that I'll have them for the 2 years or the 3 years. And I expect them to be in good academic standing, because if not... first of all, these Lutheran Colleges are not cheap to attend, and I did not come from a family of means. I had to work myself through school and I worked as a student, I worked during my breaks, I valued what education I got. But they can't major in choir. So they have to be academically strong, and the reason at a place like St. Olaf, and I would imagine Concordia tours more during its school break, but I think they miss some school. And Luther, they primarily tour during... except when they do... either the end of J term or during break. We miss a whole week of classes. If I can't return students who are on top of their work and able to make up very quickly and properly, the faculty will be up in arms. We have a diverse faculty now, a much more diverse faculty at St. Olaf than we did 20 years ago. When I was a student here they either came out of St. Olaf, or Concordia or Luther, or Augsburg, where that type of thing, you know, oh that was accepted. Now, you get people coming here from research institutions coming to teach at St. Olaf and they go "And you miss 5 days at the beginning of the semester? What's going on here?" And sometimes our administrations are very good about articulating why it happens, and sometimes they're not. And we have to be able to prove that. So if I don't have students who are strong academically, then the whole program will suffer. It's not just the choir. Our whole music program will suffer.

The other dedication is that they have to have, no matter how beautiful the voice, they have to have a willingness, not to subjugate their individuality, but they have to be willing not to necessarily have to be the star. And this has

been very interesting. We've had a number of really fine students - maybe this is more at St. Olaf than has happened at the other schools, but we attract some really fine, fine singers and several have gone on. And several of those voices at times have not yet been...they're still in flux, and as beautiful as I could see the potential, I wouldn't take them into the choir for a couple of reasons. One, the voice was in enough flux that to ask them to sing in certain parts, especially if their teachers are feeling "Well, this is a growing soprano", and they had a range, but I always look at the tessitura. What's the comfortable singing range? And maybe the tessitura is more of a first alto than the soprano.

At St. Olaf we talk to each other. We have a voice faculty. We don't have any animosity, okay? Three of the 4, 5 choral conductors, three of us have degrees in voice and we teach voice. But we want to do what's best for the singers.

There is a wonderful soprano who graduated from St. Olaf in the 1990's. Kelly has gone on to an incredible career – about 5 years ago she was on the cover of Opera Magazine. Kelly Kaduce. Her voice was SO big. The only place I could put her where she would not have wrecked the entire ensemble, because her voice was so big and colorful, it was gorgeous, was second alto. She really wanted to sing in the St. Olaf Choir her senior year. We went through - I initially took her in and all summer I worried about this. I worried not just, would she stick out. I worried... then the voice teacher side came, is this the best thing? If she were your student, would you want this? And we kind of went back and forth. By the time we got to the fall... and her teacher Janice Hardy was really good. Janice wouldn't say "No, you can't." She respected, but she also said "I'm not sure this is the best thing."

By the time we had got to the fall, we'd all come to the same decision. This was not going to work. It was not in her best interest. So she was in Chapel Choir and Bob Scholz had a larger group - he could absorb that sound a little bit, she sang I think first alto, then maybe second soprano at the end.

Incredible career in opera. And I know that my colleagues if you talked to them would have the same sorts of things. But in the end here was the spirit that was willing to be part. And we've had other kids come in there and they've already seeing the stars. And they want to come in and they don't necessarily want to... they're young and I'm not making a judgment when I say this. But I think to be part of a group like the St. Olaf Choir, to be part of

group like Concordia Choir, Nordic Choir, Gustavus Choir, whatever, you have to have a servant's heart. You have to be willing to use your gifts in service to others. I'm saying that now for you for a 3rd time in this interview. So you figure out a way of putting those words in there, okay?

Ryan: Oh, they'll be in there.

Anton: Because I think that is a big difference. I think some of that exists in other schools, you know. I see it in Brigham University Choirs. I think part of that is there is a certain discipline that comes out of the Church of the Latter Day Saints and what their people are expected to do. I see it in choir like Westminster Choir. I do. But those are kids who want to understand that maybe there's a point in their life where being part of an ensemble will enrich them as a total musician. But I think that's very true, and I need that sort of dedication. And if I get a student in the choir who won't do that, then there's issues. And I've had some – I've had kids who've been in there and years later have come back and apologized for being the way they were. I have a tenor in Washington, DC who's now a lawyer, but he came to me several years after he graduated and said "You know" (I won't say exactly the language he used at me). He said "I was a real..." He said, "I really am sorry". You know, 10 years later he had matured to a point where he had seen his life has changed. He has a voice that could be on the opera stage, but he didn't have the temperament. He couldn't deal with him being "You're not as good as you think you are." And he's a lawyer. He's a fantastic lawyer. And he now, I think, has understood what it means to use your art in service to others.

Weston likes to talk about vulnerability and I think there are a lot of aspects of that vulnerability. And part of that at this young age is, can you be vulnerable enough to admit that maybe you can't do it all and that you need others to help you, and that we grow in community. There's such an emphasis I think, and it starts with popular culture with things like American Idol and Glee and all that stuff to be THE individual. And what we are sort of teaching at many of these Lutheran colleges, we are teaching that you are part of the body – we are the body of Christ. And whether we use our talents on the... our calling might find us to be athletes, dancers, singers, nurses, doctors, teachers, we're still part of the body. And that is a distinctive difference in a perspective that I think, if we don't always acknowledge it, I think is that the essential ethos of

who we are as Lutheran colleges. Training young people to go forth, in St. Olaf's words, for lives of worth and service.

Ryan: Final question. There's been obviously ever since the time of Olaf and even with Paul J., every single conductor that has taken the helms of Concordia, Luther, St. Olaf, of course, has brought their own idea of addition to the choir. With Ken Jennings, and you know, the music, orient, and...

Anton: Instrumental and non-religious music, he opened the doors there...

Ryan: Yourself, also bringing in that multi-cultural aspect...where do you see the future of the Lutheran choral tradition going?

Anton: We're a microcosm of our large communities. We're a microcosm of the St. Olaf community. And I think in many ways we embrace at times, part of our tradition may be stronger than others. I say that in the fact that we still do a high majority of religious music. And in that way part of the religious identity of the college is embedded in who we are, and we continue to manifest that. The Christmas Festival at St. Olaf. The Concordia Christmas concert, Christmas at Luther as you now have it. More from the days of "Messiah" to what Craig Arnold started, 'cause that's when it started. He needed an event that wasn't "Messiah". And he created now and now you know it really comes to reflect in many ways what was started at St Olaf. René when he went, Paul J. just used a brass ensemble, when René came he, as he experienced with St. Olaf, he started using the orchestra and as it morphed... We have these visible demonstrations of who we are as colleges, of the church, colleges that are grounded in a gospel. And I think if we remain true to that, and this will be kind of the test, not just for these upper Midwest Lutheran schools, and you can look – I mean, there's a school in New York Heartwood College that until 1960 it was a Lutheran college. The college where many of my church people went, if they were going to go to a Lutheran college was Wagner College. That's about 3% Lutheran now. There's a larger Roman Catholic and Jewish population. How do you hold on? And so, for instance, and I'm getting to your question, but you have to understand. There has to be intentional desire. So we have Darrell Jodock right now is a St. Olaf grad who has taught for many years at Gustavus and is back as Martin E. Marty Chair. And looking at the role of the Lutheran College, I know Gustavus has done some of the same things. Concordia... because in our attempts to be diverse and more multi-cultural and more ecumenical. What

makes us distinctive? I'm an African American, but I value the Scandinavian heritage of St. Olaf, and if St. Olaf isn't careful, it will lose that. So, you know, the founder of this choir took the St. Olaf Choir to Norway twice. His son took it once, Jennings took it once, I've taken that choir there three times. Part of it was accidental, but the last couple of times have been very intentional, because as I wanted to do other things, I think it is very important that we remain true to what makes us distinctive. So I think it's going to be one element. The challenge we have is how do we continue to be relevant in the 21st century from an educational standpoint, be relevant from an artistic standpoint, but also to be relevant and true in upholding the distinctive ideals of these Lutheran colleges. I think that's going to be a big challenge for all of us. We're preparing future educators. Now a lot of those kids can't just do religious music. So as we've branched out in our curriculums, as we've branched out even my programming, and Rene's programming, and those who have led a program at Luther, how do we do that and still retain that? We see a lot of pull in a lot of different directions. I think that we may at times have to risk being called old-fashioned, we may be called – I hope we're never called archaic – but you know, we may not always be on the cutting edge of the choral art in one way. But I think, and I'm talking as a moderate Democrat, I think there is a good thing in conserving that which is fundamental to great art, and as communities of faith, and as communities that believe in rigorous intellectual training of the mind. I think the whole idea that we are training not a the brain, or if you were going to conservatory, much of hands or voices. We are lifting up whole people, and to quote a woman who has been my mentor, though I never sat in a classroom with her directly, Helen Kemp-training up these young singers, these young people, in body, mind, spirit and voice.

That will be the challenge. That will be the challenge, is to be able to be relevant. I think as I go – now we were in the Bible Belt this last tour. And yet what we were able to bring to people... you know, I programmed a piece like "It is Well with My Soul" in the same program with the Penderecki "Song of the Cherubim", and with also "Ezekial Saw the Wheel".

I need to be able to find a way to continue in whatever time I have here and people that will follow me, is to keep saying a message of hope, a message of faith, a message of love, a message of tolerance, a message of love, a message of love that in Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north, but one

great fellowship of love. And that's what you won't get in a state university, you won't get, that's what we distinctively...or you won't get in the same way, let me put it like that. But that's where I think distinctively, we as Lutheran colleges can bring. Martin Luther was the first one to argue that you don't have to sacrifice intellectual curiosity and attainment, but it's built on this foundation of faith. And the minute that we run away from that, then we lose our distinctiveness. We become one more very good liberal arts college. And who are we? And I can admire these Norwegian, these Scandinavian immigrants who came over, and St. Olaf in particular. We were not a place to train ministers. We trained, we educated young men and women from the very beginning. So I saw in St. Olaf College, I see this striving for equality. There are a lot of things basic in our ethos of who we are and how do we continue to artistically represent that, not just in a level of performance, but in the songs that we sing and the message that we sent.

Ryan: Any final thoughts?

Anton: Well, I'll just add to that, that I think in the guise to be more multi-cultural we have to watch, we have to be careful that we don't forget our roots, and I do think that's an important thing.

But I think for me, I think the church of Jesus Christ and I think certainly Lutheranism in its best sense, encompasses that. It can encompass this wide range of people, and of beliefs, and it's strong enough to do that if it doesn't leave its foundational roots. And it can encompass... and not ask people to assimilate, but ask people to find the common points. And I think, and when those become the foundations upon which you program, you share your message, then you come at it in a very different way, you come at it from a very different way. I would say that I would hope the other part of the evolution that you can appreciate and maybe you started to see and you'll better understand this, that we're more than just about how the choir sounds. Certainly the evolution that has happened in the last 45 to 50 years in all of these schools has been about being complete musicians. So maybe that's that influence over Robert Shaw who came in and was a magnitive from these kinds of extreme situations of sound, sound, sound and then in the 50's and 60's when people wanted authenticity, authenticity and all these early period groups started coming up. And in the end, you hear a great deal, you know. You have the Finley Williamson sound of the late 40's and 50's, Dave

Wampum sounds, St. Olaf still kind of doing its thing, and you have people saying now, what does it mean to produce art that has integrity, that has, and then I'm going to go to something, that the art has integrity and that it is transformational in its impact on people.

Ryan: The effect of the Lutheran choral tradition musically, the current sound, the choral sound in the United States...

Anton: Well, I'm not so sure it's the Lutheran chorale tradition, but it's interesting to me, and I've had this discussion actually recently with a colleague in the southeast, that the Lutheran choral tradition, I think, always was kind of based in a European concept of choral singing. The Lutheran choral tradition was based on this European sound. F. Melius brought both the concept of the choral singing he heard in Norway, but also the influence of his two different study periods in Leipzig. So the *Thomanerchor*. It was interesting that we had the *Thomanerchor* just sing down the street in central Luther in November. Jennings stayed long enough – right in front of me was Jennings, and Dale Warland, and you start to hear the interpretation, you hear the sound that went through his head. And whether it's the influence of people like Whitacre, and Lauridsen and their writing styles and the need for tuning and all this, but it's amazing to me to hear how more European the choral singing is happening in this country. Sometimes to me almost, it's like a pendulum swinging, so if you went back again, listening for sound, you know. Shaw came in the 40's with the Shaw Chorale, and it was an ensemble, it was an ensemble of solo voices. If you hear the Festival Singers in those last 5 or 6 years of his life, and you were to put on a St. Olaf choir and a Westminster choir, certainly Joseph Flummerfelt's final years, and St. Olaf choir of Jennings' and my years, and Clausen's, you didn't have these things, you had this sort of common, healthy release sort of singing. Sometimes I hear some of this European influence almost, and especially as they try to do music, whether it's Whitacre's, whether it's that, and it's more European than we are. And I know in some corners people are starting to reject that, and I'm worried about the whole issue of vocal health. Cause I go in and that's when I hear, as a singing teacher, I reject when I hear in a clinic somebody say "Okay, let's make the tone straight here" cause they want an effect. So I think we've always held to a certain European ideal. I've tried to broaden that palette, and I know Rene has done that – I think that's happening at Luther, it's happened all across the majority of our Lutheran schools. It's interesting to me that

when I hear some of the choirs, some of the music coming out of big state university schools of music, and I hear what they're singing, I know how they must sound differently when they're on the opera stage or in the recital hall, and I think that's going to be an interesting balance of how that works. And I think maybe what very well might happen, and I'm really being presumptuous in this statement, but that the Lutheran model almost becomes a midpoint. It becomes a healthy midpoint. But I think what I hear more and more is not this sort of voice major being forced into an ensemble and just ballyhooing away. I hear more attention and that says the things that we have long prized - attention to detail, attention to nuance of phrasing, dynamics, and not just singing AT people, but communicating. And I think that's something the Lutheran choral model has demonstrated from its inception and it has been refined through the years and through the evolving leadership.

Ryan: Okay, just to clarify, when you talk about just the midpoint – are you talking about the midpoint between that European model and the soloistic singing?

Anton: Yeah, because I think what we're doing in most and especially some of these...the more...I hate to always use those 3 schools, but I think those are the 3 schools that especially because of their touring and recording different things - they tend to be... I can tell you there's great choral work happening, for instance at Capital University with Lynda Hasseler. She was a student my very first choir at Calvin (College), and there's great choral singing there. I think Lee Nelson is doing great work at Wartburg. Wyant Morton at Cal Lutheran. I can look - Jon Hurty at Augustana. I think Paul Nesheim's bringing some new innovation to the Augustana program.

But those are not necessarily the programs that you're going to see at a national level. That's when I come back, it's still the national impact touring, recording. Rene's all those years, those 10 years of the choral school that attracted hundreds every summer in the same way Paul J. did. We still had this outreach in terms of the guest conducting that I've done, that René has done, certainly Weston did, Craig, and increasing Allen, I'm sure. And it's not just us - my colleague Chris Aspaas.

I mean this sort of milieu is passed around, doing those things. I think there's still people doing just incredible work and that tradition. And I've had people tell me who have gone to other schools, "I want to emulate what I see". I've

said just be careful that you don't imitate. Because imitation is not what you want. To emulate something is fine, but then you have to be yourself. If you simply imitate, I think you most likely will only be a pale shadow.

Ryan: Thank you very much. Are there any final thoughts that you have? I think you covered everything extremely well.

Anton: I hope you can use it and I'll look forward to your final document.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF IPA SYMBOLS

Listed are the IPA symbols for vowels discussed in this study. The left side is the closed vowel, with the vowel on the right side the equivalent open vowel.

/a/ → ah, as in <u>h</u> ot, <u>st</u> op, <u>co</u> p	/ɔ/ → aw, as in <u>ca</u> ught, <u>fo</u> ught, <u>ta</u> ught, <u>sa</u> w
/e/ → ay, as in <u>l</u> ate, <u>m</u> ace, <u>d</u> ate	/ɛ/ → eh, as in <u>m</u> et, <u>b</u> ed, <u>m</u> en
/i/ → ee, as in <u>bl</u> eed, <u>m</u> eat, <u>st</u> eam	/ɪ/ → ih, as in <u>h</u> ip, <u>l</u> id, <u>b</u> in
/o/ → oh, as in <u>sm</u> oke, <u>h</u> ope, <u>co</u> at	/ɔ/ → aw, as in <u>ca</u> ught, <u>fo</u> ught, <u>ta</u> ught, <u>sa</u> w
/u/ → oo, as in <u>lo</u> ose, <u>mo</u> ot, <u>sto</u> ol	/ʊ/ → eo, as in <u>pu</u> t, <u>loo</u> k

APPENDIX C: 2014 TOUR PROGRAMS FROM THE “POWER 3” SCHOOLS

C.1. St. Olaf Choir, Dr. Anton Armstrong, Conductor, 2014 National Tour Program

I

Exultate DeoAlessandro Scarlatti

Hide Not Thy Face..... Richard Farrant

Ich bin die Auferstehung und das Leben.....Heinrich Schütz

II

I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me.....Sir C. Hubert H. Parry

Bogoróditse Dévo.....Sergei Rachmaninoff

The Word Was God.....Rosephanye Powell

Kyrie (Missa Brevis).....Jonathan Dove

Set Me As A Seal.....René Clausen

May Your Unfailing Love Be with Us Lord.....Peter Hamlin

Praise to the Lord.....F. Melius Christiansen

Intermission

III

Organ Sonata Op. 65, No. 3 in A Major.....Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

I. *Con moto maestoso*

When the Morning Stars Together.....John Fergesun

Even When He Is Silent.....Kim André Arnesen

PreludeOla Gjeilo

Song of the Cherubim..... Krzysztof Penderecki

Glory Be to God..... Jean Berger

IV

I've Just Come from the Fountain.....arr. André Thomas

What Wondrous Love.....William Walker/arr. Robert Scholz

It Is Well with My Soul..... Philip P. Bliss/arr. Yu-Shan Tsai

Ezekiel Saw de Wheel..... arr. William L. Dawson

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho..... arr. Edwin Fissinger

Beautiful Saviorarr. F. Melius Christiansen

Optional Selections:

Jamaican Market Place (arr. Larry Farrow)

Beautiful Savior (arr. F. Melius Christiansen)

<http://wp.stolaf.edu/stolaf-choir/Northfield, Minnesota>

C.2. The Concordia Choir, Dr. René Clausen, Conductor, 2014 Tour

Program

I

Works for Multiple Choirs

Duo SeraphimFrancesco Guerrero

Sung in Latin

Agnus Dei (from Mass for Double Choir)..... René Clausen

Sung in Latin

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit aufJ.S. Bach

II

To be chosen from:

Being Peace*Russell Peterson*

II. Being Peace

II. Kiss The Earth

III. Breathing, Dwelling

The Lord Is The Everlasting God*Kenneth Jennings*

Prayers of Steel*Paul J. Christiansen*

Intermission

III

Anti-Violence Set

Freedom Come.....*Ben Allaway*

MLK *arr. Bob Chilcott*

Aurora *Hans Zimmer*

When David Heard *Eric Whitacre*

Light of a Clear Blue Morning *arr. Craig Hella Johnson*

IV

To be chosen from:

Aloha E Na Pua O HawaiiS. Mailelauli'i Naki

My Song in the Night.....Paul J. Christiansen

Calling My Children Home arr. Joseph

Jennings

Wana Baraka..... arr. Shawn Kirchener

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho..... arr. Edwin Fissinger

Beautiful Saviorarr. F. Melius Christiansen

TheConcordiaChoir.org

Moorhead, Minnesota

C.3. Luther College Nordic Choir, Dr. Allen Hightower, Conductor, 2014

Tour Program

I

The Life of Christ

Hosanna to the Son of

David.....Thomas Weelkes

Verbum caro factum est)..... Z. Randall Stroope

II. Christ is Arisen.....Ludwig Lendel

II

Of A Rose, A Lovely Rose

IV: A Spotless RosePaul Mealor

Go, Lovely RoseEric Whitacre

III

Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit aufJ.S. Bach

Intermission

IV

In Praise of the Savior

All Hail the Power of Jesus Name James Mulholland

The Lord is the Everlasting God Kenneth Jennings

Praise to the Lord..... F. Melius Christiansen

V

Words From the Prophets

O Vos Omnes *Pablo Casals*

E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come..... *Paul Manz*

VI

The Joy of Singing

Benedictio..... *Urmak Sisak*

My Romance..... *arr. Roy Ringwald*

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho..... *arr. Edwin Fissinger*

VII

Traditions

O Lord God..... *Pavel Chesnekov*

Optional:

An Expression of Gratitude, David Schwoebel

<https://www.luther.edu/music/nordic-choir/>

Decorah, Iowa

APPENDIX D: 1970 ST. OLAF CHOIR PROGRAM LIST

Cantate Domino – Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
O Lord, Creator of All Things – Heinrich Schütz
I Am the Resurrection and the Life – Heinrich Schütz
Viri Galilaei – Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
Sing Ye to the Lord – J.S. Bach
Magnificat – Jean Berger
Gloria – Ralph Vaughan Williams
Collect for Peace (for choir and tape) – Leslie Bassett
Trust in the Lord – Knut Nystedt
De Profundis – Arnold Schoenberg
All My Heart – Johann Cruger
A Spotless Rose – Herbert Howells
Hacia Belén Va Un Borrico – arr. by Parker-Shaw
When Jesus Wept – William Billings
Wake, Awake – arr. by F. Melius Christiansen
Ride On, King Jesus – arr. by Parker-Shaw
Beautiful Savior – arr. by F. Melius Christiansen

APPENDIX E: NOTE NAMES AS REPRESENTED ON A KEYBOARD

