

## George Chu

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

Q The first few questions have to do with your earliest memories of musical experiences. What kind of music was there in your home or school?

A When I was growing up I had a wonderful pianist – my sister – at home and I think that was a lot of the way I learned about music, listening to her play. And I studied piano and I studied trumpet. For some reason playing in the band, it always seemed out of tune. And in retrospect it probably was. So I think that's why early on I moved away from band and wind music towards vocal music. And certainly with the piano as a part of that all along the way.

Q What do you recall about your musical experience in school growing up?

A I have a lot of very vivid recollections of encountering pieces for the first time. I remember we did, in high school, the Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes and we had a terrific director in high school. This was in an area outside NY and he went on actually to a very successful conducting career after conducting in that high school. But I was very fortunate to be part of that time when he was doing ambitious choral works with the high school choir.

Q What would you say first attracted you to choral music? Was it that experience, do you think?

A It was partly that experience. I can remember a recording of Robert Shaw and the Bach B Minor Mass. It was a black – I guess you'd call vinyl now, 33 – and hearing recordings of that kind of music I think is partly what attracted me toward it as a profession. I certainly had always loved music but never really thought of it as a calling or a profession or a career, in those early years of my life. I loved to be around music but also was interested in a whole range of other things at that time. Then gradually, I think as I got deeper into what music was about, I was attracted to the depth of it, the interpretive and expressive side of it, the ability to capture what human life was about and express it in an art form to me was a very exciting kind of phenomenon. So certainly on the one side being physically involved in it as a participant and performer and then on the other side as a listener to hear what music could express, I think it was those two sides that eventually drove me toward it and said this is really what I want to do with my life and my career.

Q Give us a quick chronology of your career from high school on to the present day...a brief tour through your musical life.

A It's kind of a zigzag in a sense. I went to college and sang with a group called the Yale Alley Cats. We did touring of parts of the country, singing all kinds of somewhat popular music, but it was a lot of fun. Along that way, about that time, I realized that music was what I wanted to really study seriously and I took some years after college to study both piano and violin, as well as some theory and composition before going on to graduate school at Indiana in Bloomington. When I got to Indiana, Julius Herford was there, wonderful other conductors – Margaret Hillis came, John Nelson. I learned a huge amount about music in those years. It was kind of like going to paradise because I

had been interested in music and now I was in one of the musical training capitals of the world. So I had a phenomenal amount of years, in terms of experience, at Indiana. In between when I had studied composition and piano and other things, that was mainly at the Cleveland Institute of Music. So I had a chance to experience Cleveland and to hear the Cleveland Orchestra in that era, to work in the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus under some fabulous conductors – Lauren Maazel, Pierre Boulez, Raphael DeBurgos – some terrific influences in 20<sup>th</sup> century American music were there. I missed the time that George Szell was there and Robert Shaw, but I eventually caught up with Robert Shaw later in my career and that was very exciting, too. But even though at the time it was a bit of a transitional time for the Cleveland Orchestra because George Szell had been a legacy in his time, it was a very exciting time because they were bringing in many conductors who were kind of trying things out with the orchestra, including Boulez doing things like Stravinsky's *Le Noces* and all kinds of different types of music at that point. So after I migrated to Indiana to study at Bloomington, I did a stint teaching at Bradley University and then came up here when I finished my doctorate to take a job at Hamline U where I worked with the a capella choir and founded that very year the Oratorio Society, which started as the Oratorio Society of Hamline and then we became a nonprofit, incorporated arts ensemble – the Oratorio Society of MN – and I stayed with them from our founding in 1980 until the present.

Q Who were the most influential mentors or examples that you followed in your musical life?

A I would have to say at Indiana it was Julius Herford, who was very much a force in American musical life, both through his teaching there as well as his earlier work in NY with Robert Shaw and others. So he...basically his approach was to study the score and to know it very well. And that was more important than any of the other kind of outward signs of being a conductor – to really know what the music was about. He himself had an interesting history as a person and had immigrated to the US from Germany basically. A little known fact is that he actually...Julius Herford wasn't his actual name. He had changed his name when he had come here, after the Second World War. He was a marvelous teacher in terms of being a true musician, being true to what music was about, to knowing music very deeply himself and being able to teach it in a way that made a lot of sense. Even though at the time I would have to confess many of his doctoral students didn't quite see why we'd be studying these bigger works of the orchestral and oratoria repertoire because the chances of having a position where you'd actually do those were pretty slim at the time. And even as I graduated from Indiana, where there were fabulous musicians, only a very small percentage of those people were able to get jobs in music, including like the first chair trumpet player or these fabulous pianists who had studied with some of the greatest teachers in the world, were coming out of a graduate education without really the opportunity to put their trade to work. So I felt very grateful when I did finish my work there that I was able to go right into the field and start working in those areas. The other important influence in my training was Robert Page who was my first conducting teacher. I had known him through the Cleveland Orchestra chorus, where he was the director. He had followed Robert Shaw. And actually Margaret Hillis was there for a year. I had worked a little bit with her there. Then I went to study some conducting with Robert Page at Temple, in Philadelphia. But he was a very good conductor and a very dynamic person, has excellent technique in terms of getting choruses to respond to what the conductor was trying to convey.

Q Switching gears a little bit – why do you think MN has always been such a strong and fertile place for good choral music?

A I think it's a lot of different factors that have made MN a great place for choral music. One is it's a very cultural state and certainly the Twin Cities are an extremely cultural environment. I think the reason for that has something to do with the weather today where it's heading below zero and people are inside and have to find ways to express themselves that involve the arts. Of course, having the history of the MN Orchestra and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, all those things contribute to it and the traditions of the state – probably the first people who came here had cultural interests that have carried down to the present and been magnified by all the very intelligent people who have come here. The fact that we have so many colleges and universities is certainly a breeding ground for this kind of activity. And then a number of very creative individuals who have kind of led that development through the past couple of centuries. I don't think there's anything geographically – other than the climate – that lends itself to this great culture here. But just like any other major metropolitan area, when there is a cultural magnet, it keeps drawing people and it keeps drawing talent and we've benefited from that very much I think. Plus being Midwestern, I think the stable kind of family values have also contributed to people really growing up in a tradition that honors disciplined work in the arts.

Q Because we have so many choirs here – at the college, community and professional levels – there's a lot of competition, there's a lot of good music. How do you try to distinguish what the Oratorio Society does vis a vis all of the other choirs in town?

A I think each choir or ensemble has its own kind of ethos or way of working that it develops if its one that's successful. I have a lot of respect for all of the very fine choirs here in the Twin Cities and ensembles, including all the way back to high school level. There are some fabulous organizations here. And religious choirs. So its part of the fabric that's here and when people come to the Oratorio Society they often have sung in several of these other organizations and if they find their home with us, if that works for them, that's a very rewarding thing. Some might move on to something more professional at times, depending at what point of their life they're at. But I think there's richness in the diversity of what we have in choral organizations. There are times that I wish there was more repertoire available and also that choruses were able to perform more challenging repertoire than they might do. But every ensemble is balancing what its kind of artistic direction is with what the market for both attracting singers as well as audience is, and I think that kind of arrives at a certain balance. I'm always excited when the most professional organizations are doing the most challenging things to kind of move the equation forward. Of course notable among those was the Dale Warland Singers, which did commission many works and was always at the cutting edge of what the choral medium could be. I think when the choruses all are trying to be their best, they're really pushing that limit. They're trying to do stuff that is not just well known, but also great music and trying to make it better known in the community. So I think if you look at the extent of repertoire that's performed in the Twin Cities it would compare with any capital in the US, perhaps better than almost all the capitals in the US. I don't know the choral scene intimately in other cities but I have spent some time in big cities in the east and the west. And I know with the World Choral Symposium we could see that around the world there are all these fabulous choirs also. I was astounded by the number from Korea, for example. This has all happened in the last 20 years, really, in

countries like that. But we're part of a fairly worldwide phenomenon, where choral music has captured a way of often amateur participation in music at a very high level and that kind of participatory aspect I think is going to keep it going now, from where it's at to even further glory in the coming century.

Q With all the other choir concerts that happen daily or weekly, how do you program one of your concerts?

A Normally with the Oratorio Society I'll program whole year in advance, obviously, and be thinking several years in advance and trying to find repertoire that really challenges the chorus to be the best it can be in terms of what it can accomplish. Also I always try to keep in mind, there are people reminding me all the time, we want to have things that people know, that people are familiar with. Audiences don't like to just hear music that they're not familiar with, but they need some degree of familiarity with something in the program to connect them to it. So I guess in terms of a principle of organization of how to program a concert, it would include something that is thematically pulling through the different pieces of the concert and then something that also connects it to the audience as well as the singers. Now when you have a large work – like we're doing the Durufle Requiem this year – that solves a lot of that problem right there. First of all, it's a known work, the audience has some connection to it. And secondly the beauty of doing the bigger works is they are, in themselves, like reading a novel. You start at the beginning and you really want to keep going until you get to the end. So they have that beauty of construction. I'm always looking for works like that, either on the macro level – the big works that have that construction, that architecture that's exciting in itself – or even in a work of three minutes that it's building to something that's really interesting for the audience, for the singers to work at. Along that line I always apply kind of an aesthetic principle that in my teaching...when I teach courses about the arts in general, the question is always what is art? Or what is music? And I think one of the criterion that work best for me is, is everything in the work of art essential to it? Is there anything superfluous or is it really a great work of art because of the way it does whatever it does? In music – and choral music in particular – we're blessed to have text so one of the fundamental criteria for me  
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Fortunately in choral music we have text, where one of the primary criteria is how the text and the music relate to each other. The greatest works of music are often inspired by incredibly beautiful text – poetically or metaphysically or symbolically. I often spend a great deal of time with the text itself and then try and understand that at a deep level, in its original language and then we try and convey that as how the music is composed.

Q With all the choirs here and musical groups I'm sure you've had occasion to collaborate with other organizations, choirs, directors. Can you recall a particular collaborative experience that was rewarding for you?

A There have been many collaborative experiences. In a way, I think the choral fabric in the Twin Cities is quite inter-related, so I think conductors are learning from each other what they're programming, what they're conducting. So in a sense even going to a concert by another group is a collaborative experience, or listening to them on the radio. We have had the pleasure of working with musicians from the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the MN Orchestra. Those are always inspiring. I often say to my singers, this is the equivalent of the top-level professional sports teams in the country. The only difference is they're not paid at that rate of several million dollars a year. But

they should be because their expertise, their ability to express themselves in music is really at the very top of the field in the world. In terms of actual collaborations, I would have to say that perhaps when the OS sang with Rosemary Clooney at I think her last show here with the MN Orchestra – that was certainly a high point for us. We had a thrilling time doing that.

Q When you're auditioning singers, what are you looking for?

A When we're auditioning singers, most conductors are looking first at the voice – what's the quality of the voice, how well it's produced, is it a sound that will be beautiful in the chorus also? And then along with that, I think the primary aspect of an audition is to determine where the person's hearing ability is and listening ability because in the long run that's what makes a musician really successful, is whether they can hear well and interpret well in those contexts.

Q Apart from finding those qualities in the singers you audition, what elements do you think are the most critical to you in forming a chorus that you can really work with and do music at a high level?

A I think in forming a chorus you're looking for a context in the people's lives that will work well. So choruses that succeed at schools obviously are part of some kind of structure of how the school is organized or in religious organizations how they participate in the worship. Then at the more community or professional level, it's finding the right kind of niche within the community. So I think programming for the level of interest of the singers is a very important aspect of that. How the singers are motivated to want to progress within the organization. And having some kind of internal structure to the chorus so that the members really feel that they have a say in how things go for the organization is very important at every level, from school to college to professional level. I think the worst example of the downside of not doing that are often orchestras where the musicians don't feel like they have a stake in how the organization runs, so they can't really express themselves freely as people, as musicians. And of course the SPCO is a beautiful example of how the musicians do have a say in how an organization works and they play beautifully when they get together.

Q So once you have your singers together and you're meeting for rehearsals week after week, how do you go about planning an effective rehearsal that keeps singers fresh, energized and productive?

A I think the best kinds of rehearsals are when the conductor and the singers are aware of where they're at in terms of the preparation and are also cognizant of what they have to do to get to the higher level of what they're doing. Rehearsals that don't work well are usually conductors trying to get to a higher level than the singers are ready to get to and there's often – as conductors I'm sure we'd all share frustrations in that process. Then I think the task for the conductor is to step back and say, well why isn't this working? What do I need to do to bring to this so that it can work for the ensemble? I say to my singers in performance if something goes wrong, what's the first question you should ask yourself? And they'll often say, well am I in the right place or something like that. In my opinion, the first question one should always ask oneself – even as a conductor one has to ask oneself this – is it I? Am I screwing up here? In essence conductors are responsible for planning the music. They don't have to write it, but they have to plan how it goes. And one of the lessons I learned in conducting training was,

as a conductor you always have to be one step ahead of everybody else. You have to be thinking in advance. Now that makes it hard, sometimes, to be totally absorbed in the music because in terms of time you're thinking what's the next step, what's the next thing that's going to happen? At the same time, you want to be absorbed in the music and expressing what it's about. To that extent, conducting is not a relaxed activity. I think someone compared conducting an orchestra to flying an airplane. I've never flown an airplane and I know they do a lot of those things on automatic pilot. But you have to be that much aware of what's going on. And the same would be for a rehearsal. I think being aware of the body language of the people in the room, whether they're comfortable – physically – doing what they're doing. Making music is very much a physical activity and people have to feel relaxed, not necessarily not paying attention, but physically they have to feel connected to the medium that they're involved with. So I would say a successful rehearsal is where people really are connected at that physical level and a really wonderful rehearsal is where they're connected not just at the physical level but also at the metaphysical level and are able to feel like they're part of the music.

Q When you're starting to prepare a piece for performance, what's your process to understand the piece and try to get at what the composer was really trying to say?

A I think when you're trying to analyze and learn a piece, you take it apart and I always go first to the piano and play it through and then at a certain point I'll sing through all the parts, whether it be orchestral or choral parts I'll try and sing through and become aware of that. If it's an orchestral choral piece, I'll spend quite a bit of time looking at the individual instrumental parts and then trying to relate that to the orchestral score. Because the orchestral score is kind of a conglomeration of everything and you have to look at it from how the player or the singer is looking at their part, how they're interpreting it, what even the good parts or the bad parts of how the score is laid out for them, can make a difference. Good editors can make a huge difference in how we interpret the music. So I'll also do a little bit of historical background on the composer or the piece, trying to understand the context that the piece was composed in or what it might have meant at the time. I think that kind of historical background is a very fun part of conducting – trying to not just view the piece as something that is relevant to today but also had relevance sometime previously and has survived because people believed it was a great work of art. People often take the Mozart-Salieri controversy fairly seriously. But for every Salieri out there, there are thousands of other people who didn't survive, some perhaps unjustly. Perhaps some should have survived as composers that we know nowadays. But then others, like Mozart, wrote music of such exquisite expression that when people uncovered them years afterwards, in whatever context, they realized that this composer had something really extraordinary to say to humankind. I think I'm always looking for those kinds of composers who had something extraordinary to say and if we can re-say it now in this 21<sup>st</sup> century then we're also inspired by what they have done in the past.

Q This region has a large influence in the Scandinavian, German, Lutheran tradition. Talk about how you have broadened the horizons of your choirs by branching out into other musical styles.

A I've worked with primarily two groups in the past couple decades. One is the Oratorio Society of MN and the other is the a capella choir at Hamline. In both those groups we've tried to look at the choral music of the world and interpret it as authentically as we can, whatever the tradition might be. Within that certainly German

heritage and Scandinavian heritage are important but also the American heritage – spirituals of America, composers from America. Especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America became a very important choral medium for composers. So a lot of the exciting work has been done in America, recently. We've also explored the French side, the Russian side, and my latest really very sincere interest is the South American and Central American side, where I'm doing some research basically into musics of those areas and I've brought some of that into our programming here.

Q Talk about the importance of commissioning brand new works, a lot of which come from Minnesota's own composers perhaps.

A Yes, I think encouraging composers and new works is part of what every conductor has to be doing. It also keeps us as conductors very much on the cutting edge of new things. I think in a given year we should all be doing at least 20% of our works by living composers if we can. There certainly are great commissioning programs, but I'm also one who really advocates re-doing works that have been commissioned. Because often they'll get a first performance and then neglected after that, and I think if we can keep them in the repertoire and hopefully publishers keep publishing them so that we can get them as conductors – I think that's a very exciting aspect of new music, basically is works that people get more familiar with because they've heard them more than once in this recent time.

Q Good point, because it's relatively easy to get grants and excitement about a premiere, but after it's been done once, the piece often sits on a shelf for a long time until somebody else picks it up.

A Just to add one note about that, I think when...England has this model of the three choirs festivals. I think if we can connect commissioned works with bigger events and then re-do them as part of bigger events, I think that's really a good way to keep them in the public's eye.

Q People often speak of choral music as a wonderful way of building community. Talk about your view on that.

A I think choral music is a fabulous way of feeling community. I equate it a little bit to team sports. Again, you're physically involved with something and mentally involved with working together towards a common goal. The nice thing in music is you don't have winners and losers, like you do in competition, but you have that same feeling that you're working together at a common enterprise. Particularly in a society that's so technologically driven right now, with computers, often people spend 80% of their day talking to a machine as opposed to a person. I think, therefore, in a way, courses are even more important now, to connect people, to feel like they're on the same page in what they're doing in their lives and that inspiration of doing it together. I think in a way a good chorus is like a good family and people feel respectful of each other and care for each other a great deal and then working together for a common goal is a very thrilling kind of experience.

Q Something that choral music can also do is connect people to important social issues or issues of religious differences and social justice issues. Choral music can bring those societal issues to an audience and reach them in a way and touch them in a way that sometimes can't be done in other means. Can you talk about any experiences

you've had in which the text in particular has been especially poignant and relevant to some of today's pressing social concerns?

A I think text in choral music is very important to address social issues, but I wouldn't say in general that choral music can connect often with a particular time or social issue, unless the people feel it as really their music. One of the difficulties in America is that we don't have a shared kind of oral tradition of music. Some other countries that are smaller and perhaps more homogenous probably have better luck at this than we do, in terms of tunes that everyone would know. I guess one of the outstanding historical examples is when Verdi died and people in the streets would all be singing the chorus from Nabucco. We don't have quite that same tradition here, in America. We do have a very eclectic tradition that encompasses all kinds of music, but often with my students I'm amazed that they don't know the same tunes that I do and they know a whole range of tunes that I don't know. So that's one of the difficulties, I think, in feeling connected musically as a society. Whether or not choruses can overcome that by what they do, I don't know. I think choruses have kept – in the American tradition – a lot of tunes that have meaning with historical connotations that otherwise would have been lost. And they've – through beautiful arrangements of folk melodies and that type of thing – have done it. I would cite, for me personally, the most poignant case of this is Argentinean music, which has been very much connected. The Nueva Cancion movement that took place during the times of dictatorships in South America was a very important way of the people connecting and expressing – through music – things that could not be said in written form or in public discourse because it was forbidden. So there's a lot of symbolism in that kind of music and if you can understand the context in which that occurred, it is very powerful to recreate the feelings that were associated with that movement. I think in the US probably with the civil rights movement, singing was very much a part of that and that's the only – in my lifetime – time that I can think of people singing as part of a social movement that really affected us all in this country. Even during times of protest with the Vietnam War, there was very much a generation of folk music that was against the war and for me that was powerful at the time, when you think of singers like Joan Baez and others. I think when choral music can preserve those kinds of traditions – or perhaps enhance them by what it does – that it's very powerful.

A In the US, the civil rights movement was a time when people were connecting music to what was going on with social protests. That was very important in the 50's and 60's. Then into the 70's with the Vietnam War there certainly was a very strong expression of social protest through music at the time. I think back – particularly singers like Joan Baez, who were influential in developing that. For me, that's about the last point that I can think of singing as part of the social fabric of what we did in the US as a movement. Perhaps there are other ones that I'm not familiar with since then, but in terms of my own lifetime those were kind of the important connections. Sometimes when I go to concerts that are deliberately intended to honor some kind of social movement through music, I don't quite feel the connection in such a genuine way as when it's something that's really happening as part of the history of the time. I guess when you think of the Berlin Wall coming down and people singing Beethoven's Ode to Joy, there's a nice example – in Europe at least – of how people really felt the music expressed what was happening at the time.

Q How can we best instill a passion for singing in future generations?

A I think the best way to keep singing part of America's fabric is partly to develop that oral tradition of music that we don't really have central to our country. I would love to see that happen. I'm not sure how best it can happen. Music is very much an art that's taught from one person to another, so in any person's life if they can influence others to sing and to keep music as something very important, that's a wonderful way to carry it on. And certainly as we keep it in our curricula in schools and keep music prominent in how we perceive education, I think that's a very important way for us to preserve it in the fabric of society, because often people will look at academics and say, we need to learn more about this or that but if we forget the fact that the arts are very much a part of the human experience then we're missing a very big part of how we are inspired as individuals to go further in learning about things.

Q If you were mentoring an aspiring young choral conductor today – and maybe you are – what kind of key messages would you want to impart to that person based on your own life experience?

A I think in learning to be a conductor and specifically a conductor, the most important aspects include having the patience to study things with the amount of time that it takes. I think we are in a very fast-paced environment in our expectations of learning and learning music is a very arduous and painstaking discipline. Part of that has to take place at certain points of our development, so certainly between the ages of 5 and 15 people have to be laying the basis for further development as musicians. It's very difficult, if you haven't had some basis between 5 and 15, to regain that basis later on. So I would certainly advocate people encouraging their youngsters to train in music, because even though they might not see the value of it, first of all it would save them later on the child saying, I wish you'd made me study piano then. But it also would ensure that the person has a real basis for the love of music, which certainly can be partly through listening but if we're not actively engage in making the music it's very hard to make that transition between what your ears hear and what your body can produce. So I would also encourage young conductors to stay involved with more than one instrument. Obviously the piano is kind of like our key entry point into music, but whatever other instruments they can study to enhance their hearing and their understanding of the media of what music is about, the richer they'll be as conductors. And, of course, for choral conductors becoming the best singer that they can be is an essential element. Along with that, very careful study of the history of music is important, and the theory of music is important. Those two elements have traditionally been part of musical training, so musical training that involves the singing and the producing of music at an instrument – whether it be piano or violin or cello or whatever – along with theoretical understanding of how the piece is constructed and then some historical context of where this came in the development of music is very important, I think, to be a successful conductor in a true sense.

Q Talk about the role of the audience. We have so many choruses and other musical organizations in MN. Why is it important that audiences continue to support this activity?

A I think audiences gain a lot by going to live performances. They gain the presence of the music and a sense of who's making the music and how they're making it. That's something that you can't get from the finest recordings. I think the best audiences are the ones that are listening very deeply, not just because they love the music but they're also curious about how this music is going forward. Along that line,

there are some terrible audiences, including at professional orchestras where you hear the people talking about what they ate for lunch that day as opposed to what they're actually hearing in the music. So I think when an audience can be involved in how the performance is actually happening, that's very exciting. And in a way, choral music where they actually know the singers is a very important way for people to connect to what the music is, because it's not abstract. They know that John Q or Sally J on the stage went through a tough time in their life and are able to express things through how they're performing the music and are inspired by that example of those people. So very much so, music needs to have people who are loving the performance of it for it to survive and to continue and to thrive.

Q Is there anything you know now that you really wish you had known early in your career?

A It's a very hard question to ask what I should have known when I was younger that I didn't know. I feel very much that my life has taken a very solid course, thanks to terrific family background. I once did some interviews of famous musicians, much as right now I'm being interviewed. Not that I'm famous like these people. But I interviewed Robert Shaw and I interviewed James Galway and others. And the funniest comment I remember is when I asked James Galway what he thought was needed to be a great flute player. And his answer was, a supportive family. Now, I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that being the best flute player had to do with a supportive family, but basically any musician needs support and encouragement. And any person developing in life needs that support and encouragement. And I was lucky to have that in my lifetime – the support and encouragement and love of music around me that said, oh this is hard but it's worth it. In my own experience I guess the only thing I did wrong was I waited until after college to study the violin, and if I could have had the wisdom to have studied that at age 5 I think my career would have been a lot easier along the way.

Q Any final thoughts you'd like to leave to an audience of future choral singers?

A I guess if I could think of the future of choral music in MN and the US as something that everyone really believed in, in the society, I'd be very excited. If people were willing to put as much time and effort into that for decades to come, as people that I've experienced have been so dedicated to it, I would be very excited. I've often said that singing is one of the most fundamental pleasures in life. There's a cartoon in my office at school that says, I don't sing because I'm happy. I'm happy because I sing.