

Dale Warland

Interviewed by Peter Myers at Landmark Center, Saint Paul, July 10, 2008

Q Just a little bit about your childhood musical experience – what was it like in your home or your school or church growing up? What was your musical activity at an early age?

A I grew up on a farm in Iowa and all our relatives were farmers and closest friends, of course, were farmers. But music was very important in that entire community – in schools and churches, in the homes. Music was very important to my family. They were very amateur in their approach and their experience. My mother played piano to some degree. My father was a self-taught trombonist and played in a band. But the school, the little country school – I went to a one-room schoolhouse, as well as our church in a village about 3-1/2 miles away, was really our cultural center.

In the church, music was very important. We happened to have a very dynamic, talented organist and choirmaster who inspired everyone. She was a brilliant musician but also had a charismatic personality that just inspired everyone that came in touch with her. In our little country school, one-room schoolhouse, we sang every day. In my case I must have had a very loud voice because the teacher would put the 7, 8 other students on one side of the room and me on the other and we would sing canons and rounds as well as folksongs and hymns. But every day we had a portion of the time spend in music, singing. I could extend that.

Q Talk a little more about the church music experience.

A My church background is Lutheran and the inspiration that got me involved in music initially was the choir director/organist in Badger Lutheran Church, village church that really became the cultural center, also, of our community. But the organist/choirmaster – Ann Severson, I'll never forget her – she gave me my first piano lessons, she involved me very early on in singing in the choirs and that was the inspiration, that was the spark that got me going.

She also had gone to St. Olaf College so that was always in the back of my mind – if that's the fountainhead, I want to go there some day. And sure enough I did. In high school, band was still a very important part of my life so I had a tough time kind of choosing between the two as time went on. I did both, of course, for several years but then eventually choral music won out, partly because of the personalities again, of the organizations that I was a part of. It's amazing. Then going to college I, from the very beginning, I knew I wanted to be a choral conductor – a college choral conductor. So that was my goal from the very beginning.

Q Could you reflect upon your St. Olaf years and who you studied under at St. Olaf?

A St. Olaf was really an inspiration. There's a very nurturing kind of faculty there and still is. And not just in the choral aspects but I had a theory teacher, theory composition teacher, that was as much a mentor to me as the choral people. But certainly Olaf Christiansen, Ken Jennings who had just come onto the staff at that time, was an inspiration and a real supporter of my work, G. Winston (name?) was the theory person that I'll never forget. Ella (name?) Roe, taught voice and was an extremely nurturing kind of person, great passion for singing and a great passion for choral music as well.

Q Take us chronologically from graduation at St. Olaf up until the point where you got involved with Macalester.

A I was in the Air Force immediately after my years at St. Olaf and organized a chorus and brought some notoriety to the base that I was stationed at.

It turned out it was a great, great experience for me but it was also great for the base. The commanders always get the reports about the GI's who do bad things and not enough of the good. So I was in good stead with the base commander and had all kinds of support. But that was not my job. It's just that I did that on the side and it was a great experience. I went from the Air Force immediately into graduate school at the University of MN and supported my schoolwork with a full-time or nearly full-time position as director of music at University Lutheran Church of Hope in Dinkytown, part of the U of M campus, almost. But there I worked very actively with the choral department but also with composition and I was given a position as assistant conductor, as a graduate assistant I should say, to the choirs during my time there. Wally Collins, Walter Collins, Paul Fettler, Dominick Argento, were some of my key mentors during that time. But while I was at the U of M I also organized, or was asked to organize...start over Also while I was at the U of M and working at University Lutheran Church of Hope, I was asked to take over the Arbach Singers, which was a semi-pro group – professional level certainly. They just weren't paid very much. Their mission was primarily recording choral music and a great experience. Again, working at the professional level, working on recording, when I was only in my early '20's, was a great experience for later on. I went from the U of M to the U of Southern California to begin my doctorate work and Dr. Charles Hurt was probably my key person there in choral music. But I also had other mentors – Halsey Stevens, Ingoff Dahl, Gwendolyn Kalofsky – wonderful teachers and truly inspiring and again very nurturing in their help. And of course you learn most from your colleagues that came from all over the country. So I learned as much during my doctoral work from my colleagues, fellow students that came from other parts of the country with great experience, as I did from the faculty.

Midway in my work at USC I took a one-year position conducting and teaching in northern California at Hubble State College. Part of my job was to lead a chamber, organize and lead a chamber group, chamber singers. And that was really my first full blast college position and I loved it. Having, again, the experience of working with a chamber choir was exactly what I needed to fine-tune the things I'd picked up along the way. So it was a one-year great experience, great support. Then came back to Los Angeles to finish my doctorate at USC and took a position then as head of the music department and choral director at Keuka College in upstate New York. It's an all women's college near Penn Yan. I knew that that was not the place for the future so I immediately started applying for other positions because I was limited to only working with women's voices, which was wonderful in itself but it's a dead end, or was seemingly to me, for my choral dreams of what I wanted to really do with mixed voices. But I learned so much repertoire during that time. I learned, among other things, that some of the finest repertoire is written for women's voices. Some of our great American composers wrote for women's voices because they were also in colleges that were...where the enrollment was strictly limited to women's voices. So that was a good experience. But then I came to Macalester College in 1967 and that began a 19-year tenure, an ideal job in a lot of ways. In an urban setting like the Twin Cities, which offered so much, a school that had very bright students, I was able to have a large chorus, do the major works with orchestra and a chamber choir – a capella primarily – that toured extensively, and work with the brightest students that you can imagine.

So it was an ideal place to grow and that's where I really honed my skills. And I didn't work any differently in those days with college students than I did later on with professionals – the same principles. So again, it was a great growing experience to be at that college. Then during that time in 1972, I began out of a need or needs in this community, to form the Dale Warland Singers. At first it was a volunteer choir and eventually...because I had in the back of mind always wanting to recognize the talent and experience and all the work and expense that went into becoming a good singer. So as early as I could I tried to pay singers. It was very limited, of course, in the beginning but eventually we were able to go to a pay per service and establish the first professional choir in the Twin Cities. As far as I know it was the first professional choir. I'm to this day very proud of that because it means that we take choral singing as important as we do opera or symphony orchestra, and well deserved. These people are bright people who have given up a lot to develop their voices, their musicianship and should be recognized just as much as the first fiddle player in a major orchestra.

Q Could you elaborate when you said the Dale Warland Singers arose out of a need in the community.

A I mentioned that the Dale Warland Singers really grew out of a need in the community. When I say, need or needs, people would come to me and ask for

professional level group of singers for a project. I can remember the Schubert Club – Bruce Carlson – inviting me to put together a group of men’s voices to sing some Schubert works with Ernst Heffliger, who was coming to town to be a part of their season. Minnesota...it was Center Opera, now MN Opera, came to me and asked to do a concert version, furnish the chorus for a concert version of Von Williams, Sir John in Love. Subsequently other things came along just like that. We gradually went from calling the choir, the new opera chorale, or the humpty dump singers, to finally I tacked on my name just because of convenience, and the Dale Warland Singers were born, I guess you would say. But it came out of a need in this community for professional level singing. And of course we’d get a fee, a small fee, and I distributed that maybe \$5 per person – it was pretty meager, but it was a first step and it was first recognition that there is a difference between college voices that are not quite developed – certainly musically, you can do anything with the college/university level, but you simply don’t have that advantage of maturity in the sound that you can get from adult, well-trained voices.

So we went from project to project to eventually organizing, and all the things that go with officially becoming an organization in a state like Minnesota, where we not only did projects but we also then started our own little season. But very soon we were asked...before we had fully organized we were also asked to do a full concert at the Walker. For instance, knowing my interest in 20th century music – at that time – now it’s the 21st, but....start over
Knowing my interest in 20th century music the Walker Art Center asked me to put together a concert as a part of their series of 20th century music and I did. And that really kind of solidified my wanting to have a professional choir that could cut anything and my own personal passion for new music and the music of our time. So it sort of re-defined or defined this without my imposing on it at that time. However, the pressure was always to do music of every period and so our concerts would cover the gamut pretty much. Nevertheless the thrust was always the new, always 20th century and then 21st century and always commissioning and that started very early on. And over the period of our existence we commissioned some 270 works. And its amazing how they add up but we just did it casually and of course later on it became a serious part of our budgeting and our whole organization.

Q The Warland Singers was just one of several groups that got their start in the late ‘60’s to the mid ‘70’s. Plymouth Music Series and MN Chorale are two of the ones that come to mind – both were formed during the same time period. The Bach Society had been around and was still functioning. Why do you think there was such a surge in interest in high-level choral singing during this early ‘70’s era?

A I think during the late ‘60’s, early ‘70’s there were several of us that were choral conductors that were just itching to make great choral music. So I think leadership had a lot to do with that. And we each had our own kind of passions

of the style of music or the repertoire that we wanted to do, so that set us apart in some ways – not in our ultimate goals, but in the repertoire we did and the programming we did, and of course then the audiences that we attracted. I know it was difficult in the early days for me and our organization to have big audiences, partly because we were naïve enough to advertise – we’re doing great new music! That scared people away. We got the reputation of doing new music and everybody associated new music with something very boring and esoterical and probably bad twelve-tone music. Twelve-tone music is great, but sometimes we don’t realize it until we’ve after we’ve heard it, how great it is. But just that was...until people trusted us, that our programming was always going to be at a high level performance wise and the repertoire was probably going to be pretty good – we had a little rough time to fill our houses. But as soon as people trusted us, that what we did was first class, then we had no difficulty. Same way with touring. We...Columbia Artists took us under their wing and thought they would have probably a tough sell. They sold us out immediately. Our reputation had spread so quickly around the country that every house we sang with – with very few exceptions – was full, standing ovations. It was incredible to see that people around the country – through recordings, through radio – we had developed this nice reputation.

Q In this community, with its richness in choral and other classic music resources, in this environment with a lot of other choruses – how did that impact the way you functioned and the kind of repertoire you may have chosen or the type of collaborations that may have been possible? How did this rich choral environment affect your particular ensemble?

A With so much activity in one community, there are bound to be issues and even problems that can come up. With several wonderful choirs sprouting up in the early ‘70’s – late ‘60’s, early ‘70’s – there is certainly going to be some competition for audiences, some competition for funding. So that in some ways was a problem. Otherwise it made the whole community recognize that we have a lot of wonderful activity going on. How can we support it? It was all done with a good attitude. There wasn’t this dog eat dog kind of spirit in the air and there never has been. So that’s one of the things that’s unusual, I think, about Minnesota and the Twin Cities in particular is that there has been a very positive attitude about supporting lots of groups. What we all had to learn to do is define our mission a little bit more succinctly and with a keener focus. I know that when we went from trying to please everyone – with showbiz and Bach and Mozart – and really focused on music of our time and especially new music – until we did that we were floundering in a lot of ways. People didn’t know what they were going to hear when they came to our concert. They knew it’d probably be pretty good, but as far as the repertoire and focus...so I think that forced all of us in this community to really think about do we want to be when we grow up with our repertoire and our focus.

Q Once you came to that focal point in your mission, you commissioned over 200 works and did a lot of other new music. How did you go about programming a concert to achieve some kind of balance and variety and maybe a few commissioned pieces? What was your process?

A I do a lot of sketching, a lot of digging. When it's music that I have commissioned I...to me, what makes a choir and what makes a conductor is the repertoire and the programming. If a choir sings comic book music – and there's nothing wrong with comic books – they're going to maybe be a comic book choir. If they sing Shakespeare it's quite another thing. If I, as a conductor, only do comic book repertoire, I'm going to be a different kind of conductor than if I conduct Shakespeare, so to speak. So I've always felt the importance of digging, digging, digging, searching, searching, making lists, making lists, making sketches of programs – sketch after sketch after sketch – until you get what you think is a program. And of course you have to take into account what's the occasions, who, what's the audience you're shooting for, and so on. But people say all 20th century music...how can that be interesting? But there is such a variety, unlike any other period in the history of choral music. The 20th century and the 21st century has more variety than any other century. So there's no problem with programming. There's such a variety. And of course some with instruments, some without, the textures, the texts and the various parts of the world – composers are influenced by different cultures. So programming is not a problem with doing music of our time. There's too much of it; you just have to sort it out. Not all of its good.

Q When you are considering a commission and you are talking with the composer, what kind of discussion would you typically have about the parameters or the outline of what the piece might be?

A I think the composer must always know what the occasion for the performance is going to be and they need to know your choir. So if they haven't heard you live, you need recordings so they know what the occasion is, they know what the group they're writing for. But then you get just very nitty gritty – how long is the work going to be, any instrumentation, how much rehearsal time. We've gotten caught – just with that element of rehearsal time. Quite often composers, when they get a commission from the Dale Warland Singers, well they can do anything, so I'll write my most challenging work. Not knowing that we have some other music to learn in that program. And we've had two or three occasions – maybe more – where we had to abandon either the entire piece that was commissioned or part of it, because the composer shot his self or her self in the foot making it too much, too demanding for the time of rehearsal that we had. If we would have had – in a couple cases – taken all six rehearsals just on that piece, and you can't do that. So a composer's got to be made aware or made to be realistic about what a choir can do at a given time. So you talk about the duration, the nature of the text of course is key, who's going to choose the text – and that's usually the composers, but it always has to be approved by the person

who paid the money for the commission or the conductor and that usually is it. But you lay out those parameters. Once you've agreed upon it verbally, always put things in writing so there are deadlines that have to be met, of course text and who's going to own the copyright, how's it going to be reproduced, who's going to pay for the reproduction and so on. Just nitty gritty details. But that...the whole commissioning process has always been one of the most enjoyable aspects of my life. Working with these creative individuals around the world is just so stimulating. Then staying in touch with them or seeing what happens to their careers. We've commissioned a lot of people that are emerging and names that were totally unknown when we found them – or we take credit for finding them – and then see how they become household names. Stephen Paulus, Carol Barnett, Libby Larson in our own backyard, but Eric Whitacre is one of the big, the names, Jennifer Higdon, people that were totally unknown, emerging, are now world famous.

Q So far we've interviewed Stephen Paulus, Dominick Argento, Carol Barnett and Abbie Betinis. Can you think of a particularly satisfying experience that you've had with any one of those four composers?

D We've been very lucky in our own community here to have truly outstanding world class composers – Dominick Argento, Paul Fetler, Steve Paulus, Libby Larsen, Carol Barnett are some of the ones that I've worked with. And then emerging ones like Abbe Betinis and it's been a delight to work with all of them and see their careers go, and go so well. I've worked primarily with Stephen Paulus. I think we've commissioned some 40-50 works – some are short, of course, and some are arrangements when I was works, but some are semi-extended. Many wonderful experiences working with the names I've just mentioned. I remember one funny incident with Dominick Argento, who is very precise in everything he does on his scores. I mean, you can't question anything. Everything is done with careful thought. So I always took his scores literally note for note – whether it be tempo or whatever. Well I had internalized the tempo on a new work that we did of his and he came to one of the rehearsals towards the end and he said, that just seems too fast or too slow – I don't remember which way it was going but – and I said, well Dominick are you sure because I have just internalized this and I checked it on my tempo watch and it was right on. And he still argued. He said, that's just too fast. And it turns out he had to set his tempo the old Seth Thomas, metronome you see on everybody's piano, that was calibrated about ten points off. So he had to swallow his own pride on that one and buy a new metronome. But that's just one of the many things that can happen with, when you get close to performance with a new work.

Q Let's switch gears and talk about the auditioning process. I think a lot of the artistic quality of the Warland Singers certainly had to do with the particular combination of voices that you put together. Talk about how you went about assembling the wonderful ensemble that you had.

A One of the ways of looking at choral music or choral conducting is building. I like to think of building the instrument number one, building the repertoire and of course the programming that comes with it is number two, and three building you the musical leader, you the conductor. The first step – building that instrument, and I look at the choir as an instrument, it's putting together a team is another word, where every part of that team is important – if you take it seriously and if you don't start with a well constructed instrument, regardless of what level because we don't all have the luxury of choosing our favorite singer in the world to be in any given section. We take what comes to us and we choose what we think is the best mix. So what I look for in putting together that instrument are three basic things: one is innate musicianship, or musicianship number one, but part of that is both innate and developed skills. Secondly the voice and is that person singing correctly? That's the primary thing. And of course the sound and everything that goes...and you're looking and listening for a voice. And third, personality or attitude – can I live with that person for a year? So those three aspects and you can't discount the importance of any of those three. You may not get all three quite up to what you want, but at least you're looking at those things. So in the preliminary audition, after I've looked at resumes, we listen to somebody perform one or two works; one in a foreign language, to see if they're musical and above all do they communicate when they sing? Because even though you're lost in a chorus, so to speak, we still need voices that know how to visually but especially sonically communicate with their singing. So how musical are they, do they communicate, is that first part. Then we have a second stage to that preliminary audition where I am concerned about personal skills as well as getting to know the person, to answer that big question – can I live with this person for a year? Ear is very important.

Tonal memory is a part of that. How...what...just their general musical response, so I create melodies at the keyboard and ask them to sing them back to me. How really sensitive are they musically? And then how well do they read both tonal music, very simple tonal music, and atonal? Can they read intervals? Because we, having a professional choir, you need the skills to cut anything basically. You can't just pound out notes on the piano. You've got to have people that hear it and can sing it without any assistance.

Or in a given recording session or broadcast situation where you say, you take this part Mary, you take this part, and lets go. There's no wasting any time. So then if the person comes through that and there's a very promising candidate in the overall picture of those that have auditioned, then we bring them back for a final...what we call a recall or a call back and I listen to voices individually and in combination until I build what is a good soprano section and a good alto section and so on. I turn my back and my assistant assigns numbers to each candidate and I call out numbers – number 1, number 2, number 1 and 2 together, and so on until I've created what I think is a good – as objectively as I can – a good section or all four sections.

Q We've gone through the audition process. How did you go about planning an effective rehearsal?

A Rehearsals are where it all happens, so care – and we all need reminding of this in the choral conducting business – care in every aspect has to be priority. And you've got to make that a priority in your own life, as a conductor. People around you need to understand and most of them don't. I used to get telephone calls when I was still doing Macalester and doing the Singers, mid-late morning and they'd say, oh you're home. Yes, I'm at home. You're...obviously they're thinking you're goofing off and I'd already been to my office probably a couple hours earlier in the morning, came home to study for rehearsal I had a noon, and I'd say, well I have a rehearsal. Oh, a rehearsal. For what? I have rehearsal at noon. Oh, studying? Yeah, I'm....most people don't understand that a conductor just doesn't walk in. There's a lot of study and the more study you do, probably the better rehearsal you're going to have and the better concert you're going to have ultimately. So a rehearsal for the singers has to be some...has to be very well planned so that they know you're serious about it. And I always put on the blackboard in the rehearsal room what we're doing at a given minute. I mean, at 7:00 vocalizing, at 7:05 page 1 through 13 of the Bach whatever. The singers will right away know that you've got some method to your madness. Above all you have to come totally prepared. You must be prepared and as soon as you show that you're not, you're choir's going to lose the confidence. They're going to have much greater expectations of themselves if you expect a lot of yourself as a conductor. They're going to see that this conductor means business, he's hoping, she's hoping that we'll get something really important accomplished during this three hour session. Starting on time, ending on time, having treats, making the atmosphere pleasant, good lighting, good ventilation, places to park – all these seemingly mundane things are also important. But above all, having good music, and you're well prepared and well organized, is important. It's also important that the...just reinforces what I've said, it's important that a choir knows way out – two, three months if necessary – what we're going to do on a given day at rehearsal. That on Monday September 13th we're doing these three works or the sections from these three works. So me, in my home preparation as busy as I might be as a tenor, I can have this all ready to go – I come to that rehearsal prepared. That's a huge thing. And a lot of choirs – including church choirs – never think of it. Why shouldn't a church choir come prepared to a rehearsal just like any professional choir?

Q In terms of your own score preparation, if it's a piece that's new to you, when the score arrives, what do you do? How do you prepare yourself to really get your head around the new piece?

A I tend to work at the keyboard a lot. I have some facility, but not probably good enough, which can be an asset and can be a deficit too I guess. But I like to look at the overall, first of all. That's just fun to do. But I get to the details very

quickly – both my own study and also with the choir. I think only after the details are in place that you can start really making music. I'm talking about knowing all the phrasing, the divisi assignments, confirming the dynamics are there – you may want to change them slightly for whatever reason, because of (word?) or whatever, and unifying the pronunciations. So right off the bat you're all agreeing on one pronunciation or at least you try one. But I really like to have all the details in place. I sing every line, I play every line, I conduct every line, I conduct the whole thing – practice, I mean at the keyboard. So I internalize even before that very first rehearsal. It's very important that the markings get to the singers in an efficient way, in advance if at all possible. When I say markings, the divisi assignments of course, so I know what part I'm going to sing if I'm a second soprano, all the way through the piece, all the phrasings, all the pronunciations – the things that we just mentioned.

Q Talk about the long relationship you've had with the SPCO. Perhaps you can recount that first St. Paul Sunday Morning experience, but talk about the long history that you have had with the Chamber Orchestra.

A The Dale Warland Singers were very fortunate to have invitations to collaborate with the SPCO since practically the beginning. It was especially exciting during the sort of rebirth of the SPCO when Dennis Russell Davies came to town, who had the same passion for new music and music of our time that I had. So we did a lot of wonderful things with him. But over the years of the Dale Warland Singers existence, we did some 40 collaborations, all very exciting. So when I was invited just this past year to put together a professional choir for the 50th anniversary of the SPCO I jumped at the chance to work again with that wonderful orchestra. The organization is outstanding and the players are outstanding.

Q Talk about the repertoire that you're preparing for the season – there are three programs, as I understand it.

A Yeah. There are three-concert program spread out through the season. The first involves Scottish work, a Scottish composer – James MacMillan – Seven Last Words from the Cross, paired with Handel Ode to St. Cecelia. That's conducted by Douglas Boyd, who's from Scotland. The second project is the Haydn Creation with Nick McGegan, sung in English. And the final is a romantic program, Mendelssohn Midsummer Nights Dream and the orchestrated movements of the Brahms and that's conducted by Hans Graff. So it's a nice variety spread out throughout the whole year.

Q When you are preparing the chorus that will ultimately be conducted by another conductor, how do you communicate with that conductor to make sure that what you're preparing is in sync with what they're going to want?

A Working with a guest conductor can be tricky, especially when they're way across the globe. But it's very important, if you can, meet that conductor. It's very important to get his or her markings, if that's possible. Or at least communicate and say, what do you want me to do? Do you want me to go my own way and then you take it or leave it when you get here or do you want to send me the markings? You have to just work on that. In the case coming up, working with Nick McGegahn on the Hayden creation there are several translations, several texts I should say that can be selected. Are you going to use one single one that's put out in the music that you hold in your hand or are you going to find some other setting, some other text that's more agreeable to your tastes or what you know historically? So things like that have to be settled beforehand.

Q The Warland Singers did a lot of touring and a lot of recording and a lot of broadcasts. Can you think of a particularly memorable occasion from either a recording or broadcast or tour that just was so affirming to you and what you were doing and what your vision was...that was just very satisfying to you?

A It's difficult to point out just one experience that was above every one else when it comes to extraordinary performances by the Dale Warland Singers. I think in 1985, when we were invited to sing for our colleagues from all over the country as part of the final closing concert in San Antonio, TX – it was the ACDA, the American Choral Directors Association final event. And we were actually substituting for the Moscow Chamber Choir, who couldn't make it. We just happened to hit a great night as far as our performance level. I think we knew who was in the audience – that made a difference, including Robert Shaw – but the repertoire we did we believed in so much and it was pretty much unknown, a lot of it. So we were excited about the repertoire we were presenting, we had prepared it well, and we had an audience that was so receptive. It was just...and everything came together. That's hard to top, when things like that happened. But I've had concerts where just very few people were in the audience. And I'll never forget them – with both the Dale Warland Singers and my college choir. We were in a little town in Poland and it was a radio broadcast – I think a live performance – I don't think we ever have sung better. But you know, I don't know how many people heard it; I don't remember the dates or the exact town. We sang in a little town in Illinois with my college choir, too, where I remember being so excited I picked up the manager and lifted her up in the air and she weighed a good amount – I was just so invigorated. You just sort of become superhuman when something like that happens. But there have been...back to the Dale Warland Singers I think also of singing in Kansas City in 2003 – one of our last touring concerts. Again, we got a standing ovation before we started to sing – as we walked into the room. People knew it was one of our last concerts and that just electrified us. We sang one of our best concerts ever that afternoon.

Q Talk about the whole aspect of making a recording. How many have you made over the years. Dozens?

A 25, 30 I think it is.

Q That can be a very stressful time. Talk about the different kinds of pressures that you get when you're making a recording as opposed to giving even a very important performance.

A Recording is very stressful. One wouldn't expect it until you get into it. It has to be planned very carefully. First of all, you of course will have a concept of what you want the recording to be, and it has to be agreed upon, because in a case of professional recordings, its very expensive. Not in any special order, but I think it's terribly important to have a team, the technical team that clicks together. I'm talking about conductor – you the conductor, me the conductor – an engineer, sound engineer and a producer. The three of you have to really click, especially the producer and the conductor, because you're relying on that person's ears to make some decisions under a stressful situation. It's very important to work carefully with the producer on planning each night. On a given recording that the Dale Warland Singers did there usually were four sessions, four, four-hour sessions and quite often they would start late at night because of street noise. So, again, everything has to be planned very carefully. Program it so that it's not too stressful physically, vocally, and emotionally. You want to pace the evening so you may...and you only can take, plan on keeping I think it's like between 7 and 15 minutes out of a given four hours. That's about what you can expect to keep so you've got to cover the material enough times so you know you're going to have that much that's worth keeping. A producer usually always wants you to do two complete takes, nonstop. And then you go back and you do sections and you do that section until you get it right, until you know its right and then you go on to the next section and so on. So there is that tedium that can result in repetition and it can be just one little noise – somebody's knee can crack or someone hits the wrong note or something – it can be a multitude of things, or a car outside. So patience is very important and persistence along the way because you as the conductor have got to be the cheerleader to keep going, keep going, keep going. And to be the cheerleader and to be a set of ears listening all the time and performing, performing, performing all the time is very exhausting. I mean it's one thing to do a concert with an audience there. It's quite another thing to conduct for four hours, to perform for four hours straight with trying to get your very best. So you have to expect that it's going to be work. You go home at night and you're just totally wiped because it is so – if you do it right – it is very exhausting. I should go back and just say one more thing. I'm saying all this while at the same time saying that recording is an exciting exercise. There's nothing else like it to bring a choir to a peak. You simply don't listen for all the things you, in getting ready for a performance, that you do in a recording. Suddenly your ears become so...and your eyes become so focused on details that otherwise just sort of went by. It's amazing how you gain a new

insight into the music that you might have performed several times. So recording does a lot to bring you to your very best as far as developing your skills are concerned.

Q I'd like to circle back a little bit to the earlier discussion we touched on when you were starting to form the Warland Singers and you were determined that people would be paid, albeit a minor amount. But that was the beginning of the era in Minnesota and nationally for actually recognizing choral singing as a professional art. Put that in a national context of what influence you may have had here with other groups, the formation of Chorus America and all those activities that were happening in the mid to late '70's, early '80's, to bring a new level of recognition to the professionalization of choral singing in this country.

A I wasn't the only one around this country that had the idea that singers should be recognized with pay, with dollars. It happened in other parts of the country – Philadelphia was one of the first. The Philadelphia Singers, Michael Korn, and he because he felt so strongly that we need to bind together as...around the country...organized or helped several of us organize what was called APVE – Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles – a support group, a support effort at least, coming together to really encourage every aspect of developing professional choral music in the US. Up until then, only the military had paid choirs and Metropolitan Opera. But subsequently we had groups springing up all over. Then there were touring groups – Norma Luboff, Roger Wagner, Robert Shaw – would put together groups and go on the road, but it was short term project – project to project, tour to tour, recording to recording. But to have ongoing, established professional choirs was a new thing in this country with very few exceptions. So this was an effort and it stimulated others to do the same thing in their communities. So all over the country there have sprung up professional choirs – either fully professional or core membership that is paid –so you have professionals that are in the ranks of an otherwise volunteer group. But the APVE then, the Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles, became because of a need to support other independent choirs, became Chorus America, which means we have children's choirs, community choirs, any choir that's independent of support for instance a college choir or church. So in some ways that organization has changed to great...quite a bit...great extent. In other ways its still there to support professional, but it's a little bit watered down now for focused support of professionalism. I don't know if that covered it or not.

Q What advice would you offer an aspiring young conductor today?

A If I were going to make recommendations or mentor a would-be conductor today I would say, first and foremost become the best musician you can. Observe other outstanding conductors throughout the world – make that a priority to go and soak up, listen, meet, observe the best before its too late. Next I would say develop your ear, your listening skills, every aspect of it – not just pitch and things, but learning to hear balance and texture. Do whatever you can to

develop your ear and your reading skills. Next I would say learn all you can about the voice, the instrument that you're going to be working with. Not that you have to be a great singer yourself, but learn as much as you can about your own singing but especially how to recognize good singing, good techniques in others. Then repertoire – to be truly an outstanding conductor you must know repertoire and develop skills as a programmer. Not that you have to remember, because titles and composers can slip by, but make lists and do research whenever you can. Listen, listen, listen. Buy recordings, go to concerts, just soak up all you can about repertoire because, again as I might have mentioned earlier, what the choir becomes – any choir you take on – is through the repertoire. What you become as a conductor, as a musical leader, is through the repertoire. So those are the things I would really strongly urge would-be conductors to follow and to aspire to.

Q Is there anything you would like to cover or talk about that we haven't?

That was in, that's covered. Let me just extend this last thing with a story, maybe, if it be called a story. I mentioned go and observe conductors. Meeting conductors is an important thing too. I think I'm really not...a pretty shy person in some ways, but I learned to be bold very early on in meeting people and also in inviting composers. Two little incidents. One when I was probably still in high school, MN Orchestra came through our town and in those days they used to travel by train and do touring. And this was Fort Dodge, IA, and they were in a junior high gymnasium. Very few people were there. I can just vaguely imagine as I think back, probably 100, 150 people were there. Can you imagine? There's the MN Orchestra and the conductor I didn't know of course. That was the first time I'd ever heard a live orchestra. But he was smoking a cigarette at intermission time on the steps and I just thought, I'm going to meet this conductor and just...well it turns out, I found the program some years later – it was Demetri Metropolis. I had the bold guts to go up and say hello to Demetri Metropolis when I was just in junior high. Also when it came to commissioning I was very naïve – bold but naïve. I'd heard a work by Jean Berge when I was at St. Olaf and I thought for my Viking Male Chorus I'm going to invite Jean Berge to write a piece. I didn't know you ever paid a composer. I had never heard the word commission. I just thought you asked somebody to write, and a composer would write. Well I did this and sure enough he wrote me a piece – no charge, no money – and it turns out it was his first commission in this country. He had come to escape the Nazi threat; he had come the US by way of South America and was teaching at Middlebury College. And I just tracked him down, just wrote him a letter, didn't call or anything and I don't know a month, month and a half later, I had a manuscript for my male chorus at St. Olaf waiting on my desk. It was a good lesson on being bold. I wouldn't advise it for everyone, but it has worked because I have continued to always go backstage, meet the conductors and the composers, and it has expanded my horizons a great deal.