

## Interview with Chorus Master Judith Clurman

### Interview with Judith Clurman Part One



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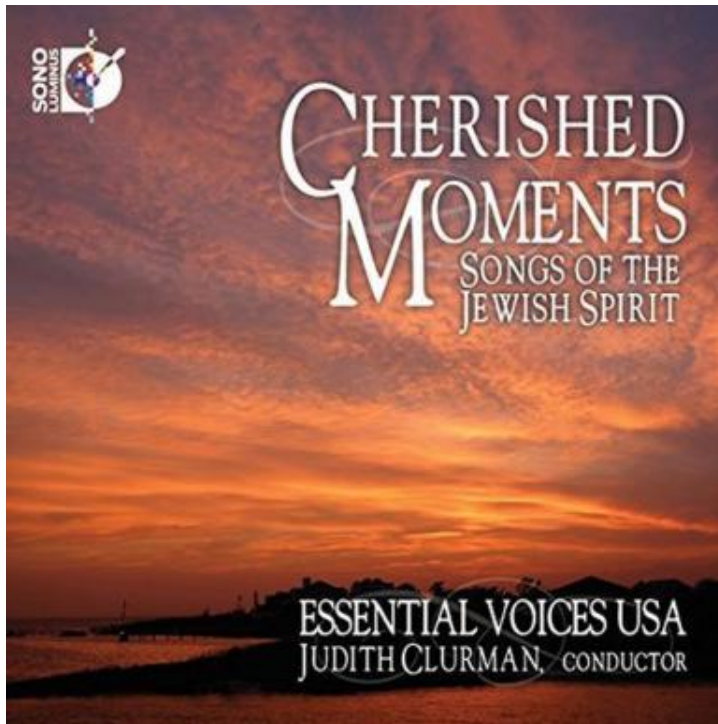


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The following is part of a four-part interview with [Judith Clurman](#), an Emmy-nominated and Grammy-nominated conductor and choral master. She is both an advocate for new music and great works of the past. In the words of contemporary composer Jennifer Higdon, “Working with Judith Clurman is always a delight. She's so professional and such a superb musician, that I always know the end result will be incredible...a great thing for a composer to know.” She has collaborated and worked with numerous renowned organizations from Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series and the New York Pops to Sesame Street. Her past accomplishments are extensive and will be discussed in length, but what is even more important is her relevance in today’s choral world.

In this part of the written interview, Clurman shares insights on how to run a choir and what it is like being a choir master. Be sure to check out parts [two](#), [three](#), and [four](#) of the interview.

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**Q: What is most important to you when preparing a chorus for a production? How do you plan your rehearsals?**

A: First I study the text and orchestral score. Then I play through the music on the piano. Then I make an outline of the piece and figure out my rehearsal game plan. There are many factors to consider: the type and the size of the chorus, the vocal quality, the acoustics of the hall, and the rehearsal time allotted to the piece. I will have a rehearsal routine worked out ahead of time, but I

am flexible! Sometimes I need to change my plan right on the spot. Planning is important, but so is being able to change those plans quickly and efficiently.

**Q: What do you like best about working with choirs?**

A: Interacting with the singers, teaching them what to do, and helping them make the little black dots on the paper come alive.

**Q: You have collaborated with world-renowned orchestras, dance companies, musical festivals, and more. Can you tell us how you are able to adapt to diverse cultures and situations?**

A: It is exciting to be a freelance musician. I have had the chance to collaborate with the who's who in classical music and in [musical theater](#), TV, and work with some dance. And as a freelancer, I am always walking into a new situation. That means dealing with new people from various backgrounds and making sure to be musically prepared for the job. It is always a challenge to assemble a group and/or work with a new group of people. I do not have a favorite or a memory of a bad experience, but I have to admit that some jobs are more fun than others. Everything takes hard work to get it right, and everything takes rehearsal. I always enjoy the present and the project in which I am currently working.

**Q: What is your most cherished musical experience as a conductor?**

A: I have a few. The highlight was conducting a very moving Friday night (Shabbat) service with cantor and choir in a little town in the Czech Republic, because it was the first time a service was held in the rebuilt synagogue since 1938. People came from all over to listen. Next were the two performances of the Mozart *Requiem* [sing-along](#) that I conducted for the first and fifth anniversaries of September 11. The first was led in the Juilliard Theater and the second at Carnegie Hall. All of New York City came to commemorate, become a community, and sing along with my Juilliard Choral Union and Orchestra. The third event was both personal and public. My friend and colleague Marvin Hamlisch died. I was called to organize six hundred singers to sing his funeral at Temple Emanu-El and organize the music. It was so moving to have six hundred people become a chorus and sing "The Way We Were" and "What I Did For Love" in Marvin's honor.

**Our Expert Recommends**

- [Choral Repertoire with Judith Clurman](#)
- [From Sesame Street to Carnegie Hall with Judith Clurman](#)
- [Judith Clurman on Preserving and Supporting the Choral Tradition](#)

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