

Choral Repertoire with Judith Clurman

Interview with Judith Clurman Part Two



By [Katrina Schmidt](#)
[Singing Expert](#)



Image courtesy of [PriceGrabber](#)

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 her insights on choral repertoire, including the top six choral masterpieces every singer should become familiar with. Be sure to check out parts [one](#), [three](#), and [four](#) of the interview.

October 3, 2014

Q: You mentioned several great works such as Mozart’s, Brahms’ and Faure’s Requiems as significant rites of passage for conductors. What are the top five most important works singers should become familiar with and why?

A: I have six! My favorites are Mozart, Brahms and Faure's Requiems; Bach's *Mass in b minor*; Haydn's *Creation*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. They are a must for a musician. They represent fine compositional technique and art at its finest. In some sense, they teach us about the anatomy of music and [speak to our emotions](#).

As an advocate of new music and having commissioned and premiered works by over fifty American composers, including Milton Babbitt and William Bolcom, what contemporary works would you like to see performed more often?

I would love to see people sprinkle a concert with a short new commissioned work, when it is appropriate. We must commission new works and support the new and unfamiliar along with the classics.

I love the music I recorded on a New World recording called *The Mask*. It included chamber works by William Bolcom (*The Mask*), Mario Castlenuovo Tedesco (*Romancero Gitano*), and Virgil Thomson (*Campion Songs*). I especially love the shorter "Americana" works that I commissioned and recorded on the Sono Luminus recording, [Celebrating the American Spirit](#). I hope you check them out.

Are there choral works you have never worked on, but would like to; or artists you would like to have the chance to work with?

Of course. I would love to have funds to conduct some more oratorios. Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is at the top of my list.

What would the world be losing without great choral music?

The world would be missing great art. Just imagine never hearing live performances or recordings of the *Mass in b minor*, the Mozart, Brahms, and Verdi Requiems, *The Creation*, the *Ninth Symphony*, etc. I doubt that this can happen. The world will still be listening to these pieces (and others) in one hundred years. They are too good and should remain in the top ten list forever!

I had the honor of working with you on the Brahms' and Faure's Requiems with the Omaha Symphonic Chorus and Omaha Symphony. Can you tell us about your connection to Omaha and some upcoming events?

I am pleased to work with the choruses in Omaha twice a year. Last year I served as chorus master for 150 singers, for conductor Thomas Wilkins and the Omaha Symphony for performances of the Brahms's *Requiem* at the Holland Performing Arts Center. In March I conducted the chamber symphony, a student chamber chorus from Creighton University, and organist Dana Sloan, in a performance of the Poulenc *Organ Concerto* and Duruflé *Requiem*. This fall I will prepare the symphonic chorus for Mahler's *Second Symphony*. In April 2015, I will conduct a program with the chamber symphony, along with members of The Creighton Chorus supplemented by some adult singers, in a community orchestra program at Temple Israel.

It will feature choral and solo selections from Haydn's *Creation*, orchestral music by Darius Milhaud and Paul Schoenfield, and some shorter works for both chorus and orchestra.

Our Expert Recommends

- [Judith Clurman on Preserving and Supporting the Choral Tradition](#)
- [From Sesame Street to Caregrie Hall with Judith Clurman](#)
- [Interview with Chorus Master Judith Clurman](#)

© 2014 About.com — All rights reserved.

<http://singing.about.com/od/choirsinging/fl/Choral-Repertoire-with-Judith-Clurman.htm>