

OSTINATO WANGARATTA INC

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NEWSLETTER

AUGUST, 2004

"Don't our new business cards look great? (Never mind the couple of print mistakes)."

Our singing group is coming together very well on some of the music pieces. We will sound good to the audience even though we are new as a choir. Practise at home and remember to keep your eyes on the conductor. Use taping machines if you can't read music - wonderful for the practise session at home. Ruth, our conductor, has great patience and is fun to work with. THANK YOU RUTH. Please be attentive to all she says, she is too valuable to wear out!

Definition of a CONDUCTOR – "a musician who is adept at following many people at the same time"

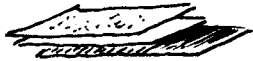
We are now covered by insurance.

AFFLE MONEY or tickets are to be back by the end of August.



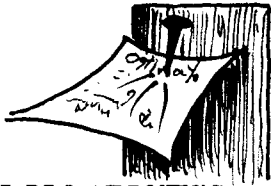
Applications for a Council Grant close in October 2004. Patrick and a small subcommittee are to study the papers relating to the grant application and decide what to do.

MUSIC SUGGESTION SHEETS to also be returned by the end of August.



A note left for a pianist from his wife – "Gone Chopin, (have Liszt), Bach in a Minuet".

ADVERTISING FLYERS have been well distributed around town.



We have a SINGING DATE AT THE CENTRE on Thursday 2 September 2004 at approx 3.30 pm. 15 – 20 mins performance by those of us who are able to attend. The songs are likely to be "Harmonium Mundi", "Bound for South Australia", "Juanita", "Golden Slumbers", "Old House". Ruth will organise the program.

PROPOSED DATE FOR BBQ AT RUTH'S – Sunday 12 September 2004



BYO meat and drink.
Salads to share – Sopranos & Altos to bring.
Deserts – Tenors & Basses or members with specialty secret treats.

CWA Wangaratta also asked us to sing at their birthday celebration on 21 October Thursday – but Ruth and Bronwyn are unable to attend. A decision will be made later if a group may still be able to perform at the hall.

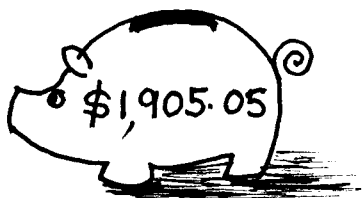
ACCOMPANIST – Helen Byrnes is unable to accompany us at rehearsals. Patrick has 2 other people to chase up.



Q "Why can't many vocalists get through the door?"
A "They either can't find the key or don't know when to come in".

CHILDREN who attend our weekly rehearsals will be able to go home early at half time. (This is not a joke).

Jan Wagner has offered to be our CONCERT PIANIST.



Our bank balance.

Definition of "Counterpoint" – "A favourite device of many Baroque composers. All of whom, are dead, though no direct connection between these two facts has been established. Still taught in many schools, as a form of punishment".

"Discord" – "Not to be confused with Datcord".

"Duration" – "Can be used to describe how long a music teacher can exercise self control".

"Vibrato" – "Used by singers to hide the fact that they are on the wrong pitch"



PREHISTORIC VOCALISM

**“In the beginning was the voice.
Voice is sounding breath,
the audible sign of life”.....Ibid.**

Singing, the vocal production of musical tones, is so basic to man its origins are long lost in antiquity and predate the development of spoken language. The voice is presumed to be the original musical instrument, and there is no human culture, no matter how remote or isolated, that does not sing. Not only is singing ancient and universal, in primitive cultures it is an important function associated not so much with entertainment or frivolity as with matters vital to the individual, social group, or religion. Primitive man sings to invoke his gods with prayers and incantations, celebrate his rites of passage with chants and songs, and recount his history and heroics with ballads and epics. There are even cultures that regard singing as such an awesome act they have creation myths relating that they were sung into existence.

It is likely the earliest singing was individualistic and improvisatory, a simple imitation of the sounds heard in nature. At what point the singing of meaningful, communicative sounds began cannot be established, but it was doubtless an important step in the creation of language. Many anthropologists believe the development of a lowered larynx (important to articulate speech, as it effectively makes the flexible lower tongue the front wall of the pharynx) was a relatively recent aspect of human evolution.

There are no bones in the human larynx, so archaeological remains offer no direct physical evidence of the vocal apparatus of prehistoric man. We lack studies that correlate vocal characteristics to body size, the basic gender difference aside, but there is general belief large-bodied peoples (Slavs, for example) frequently produce low-voiced singers, while small-bodied peoples (Mediterraneans, for example) produce more high-voiced singers. If there is any validity in this, the voice that belonged to the owner of the prehistoric jaw bone unearthed in 1909, at Heidelberg, Germany, may have been remarkable – it is half-again the size of a modern jaw.

Carrying the idea of relating body size to vocalism into more recent periods, we see modern man has grown too large to fit the armour of medieval knights and, still more recently, we suspect an increasing rarity of the male alto voice type. Tempting though it is to see a relationship between such things, we lack the means to support it factually.

Based on our knowledge of the singing of present-day primitive peoples, a possible scenario of musical development would begin with simple melodic patterns based on several tones. Pitch matching (several persons singing in unison) might emerge next, with singing in parallel motion (the natural result of women or children singing with men), call-and-answer phrases, drone basses and canon as subsequent steps.

All this could lead to an evolving sense of tonic and scale structure (primitive music often uses pentatonic scales) and development of such basic musical devices as melodic sequences and cadential formulae.

.....excerpt taken from
www.lawrence.edu/fac/koopmajo/antiquity.html
on a “Brief History of Singing”.

Next Newsletter will go on with the chapter on “Historical Antiquity”.

.....can't make you cross-eyed reading too much in one go!



Finally –

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

A tourist is sight-seeing in a European city. She comes upon the tomb of Beethoven, and begins reading the commemorative plaque, only to be distracted by a low scratching noise, as if something was rubbing against a piece of paper.

She collars a passing native and asks what the scratching sound is.

The local person replies

“Oh that is Beethoven. He's decomposing”.

