

# OSTINATO WANGARATTA INC

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## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 2004

*"GREGORIAN CHANT" - is a way of singing in unison, invented by monks to hide snoring.*



Our committee has prepared and presented to the Wangaratta Council a grant application for \$2,500 per year over three years. *Thank you to Evelyn and Bronwyn for preparing the application and also to Marita for her advice on how best to do it.*

Music Suggestion Sheets - have been colated - there is a lot of variety in style of song. Sheets will be distributed later. Ruth will study them to work out the format for 2005 .

REMEMBER THURSDAY 21 OCTOBER AT THE CWA HALL FOR THE CWA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS. Turn up about 1.00pm to 1.15pm. The program will be a rehash of "The Centre" program plus our anthem. There will be 2 brackets of 15 mins. The CWA has offered us a donation for the performance.

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*"An Heroic Tenor" - A singer who gets by on sheer nerve and tight clothing .*

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October Bank Balance: approx. \$2,448.75

SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER CONCERT  
2.00PM. ST JOHN'S HALL. TICKETS \$5.

To be 1hr 15 mins duration.

¾ hour then 15 min interval (no eats) then ¾ hour.

Jan Wagner is to play piano.

Choir members are to bring a plate of afternoon tea each to share.

Advertising Flyers will be handed out to each choir member to be distributed and displayed around our local towns.

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*"Dacapo al fine" - I like your hat*

*"Fermata" - a brand of girdle made especially for opera singers.*

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The Moyhu Lions Club has invited us to sing at their Carols by Candlelight on the 10 December 2004 at 8.00pm. A reply will be determined according to how many members will be available. We have declined the Wangaratta invitation for this year, but will consider it for next year if certain conditions are met.

THANK YOU TO John van Riet  
for making our conductor's  
absolutely necessary rostrum.

THANK YOU TO Tom Canavan for making the wonderful lagerphone.



"WELL, I SUPPOSE THIS RULES OUT THE 'HALLELUIAH CHORUS'..."

*"Trill" - The musical equivalent of an epileptic seizure.*

*"Vibrato" - The singer's equivalent of an epileptic seizure.*

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**"Brief History of Singing" . . . . .continued**

### THIRTEEN CENTURIES OF SACRED MUSIC

In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Christianity was officially established as the official religion of the Roman Empire and SCHOLA CANTORUM was established by Pope Sylvester. The Roman Catholic Church would control the development of Western music for the next thirteen centuries, a span that saw music change from simple unison chant to the highly developed polyphonic choral style of palestrina. This era was marked by a recurrent pattern, roughly three centuries in period, when the reigning Pope, concerned with the purity of the church's music, would order stylistic retrenchment and place new restraints in the creativity of those who were prone to elaborate the music of the Mass.

Three styles of chant melody evolved: syllabic (for clergy and congregation), neumatic (several notes to a syllable, for choristers) and melismatic (florid, for soloists). Metricity in either chant texts or melodies was uncommon, but occurred as early as the fourth century. About 600 AD, Pope Gregory (whence Gregorian chant) reorganised the Schola Cantorum. His reform standardised the liturgical repertory and changed the character of the Christian service from unbridled ecstasy to subdued reverence. By 800 AD, the repertory was again being enlarged with newly created material called TROPES. Plainchant manuscripts are extant from the ninth century, which was also when the first known examples of polyphony occurred and the deterioration of chant began - to continue into the thirteenth century - as its original simplicity was gradually effaced by the ongoing use of specialised singers and their introduction of ornamentation and virtuosic effects.

**About the tenth century, musical notation began suggesting pitch movement by placing symbols above or below a horizontal line and the slow development of multiple-line staves began.**

In the graphic art of the Middle Ages, singers were often shown with strained expressions, their furrowed brows, protruding veins and exaggerated mouth positions suggesting and effortful, possible nasal quality – twangy or reedy – like the instrumental colours of the time. Chaucer, in his fourteenth century “*Canterbury Tales*”, described singing of the time as being “intoned through the nose”. Straight tone was the probable norm, with vibrato being reserved for use as an ornament, as were a stock of ancient vocal devices; portamenti, turns, trills, and the intentional use of the qualities of the various vocal registers. The yodel was probably used as well.

... The idea of high and low pitched voices arose with the coming of polyphony in the ninth century.

(In next month's newsletter).

[WWW.lawrence.edu/fac/koopmajo/antiquity.html](http://WWW.lawrence.edu/fac/koopmajo/antiquity.html)

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*“virtuoso” – a musician with very high morals.*

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#### **HOW TO OBTAIN A CLEAR, DISTINCTIVE VOICE**

What is it that gives a few lucky persons a rich, melodious voice, which can be distinguished amid a host of others? And just what is the reason that when most ordinary people sing or talk, they tend to sound on average, very much alike?

The answer lies in their vocal cords. Think for a moment, of two different elastic bands, stretched across an open metal can like strings across the sound box of a guitar. The first elastic band must be very thin, while the other one must be fairly thick. If plucked with a finger, the thin elastic band will naturally vibrate by far the easiest, and it will produce a thin, light tone. The thicker elastic band, on the other hand, will require a harder pluck to make it vibrate, and its sound will have more character and depth.

The vocal cords of the human voice work in very much the same manner. The actual “sound” that humans make originates from the vocal chords. These chords vibrate when they are stirred into motion by the passing of breath, just as the plucking of a finger, stirs the elastic bands to produce sound.

Some people have vocal cords which are thin and which can vibrate easily, producing light tones. Others, on the other hand, have thick vocal cords which, while they don't vibrate as easily, produce stronger, fuller tones when stirred into action.

In most cases the person singing or speaking vibrates only a part of the outer surface, instead of vibrating the entire vocal cord. In such cases the voice is small, thin, and frequently husky.

Do you remember how kids used to like to blow in tightly-stretched plastic candy wrappers, or even tree leaves in order to make a loud whistling sound? The idea was to hold any such thin material securely between the thumb and forefingers of both hands, and to blow across the material with force.

If you ever did that, you may recall that if the material wasn't stretched tight enough. Little or no sound could be produced. And often the material had to be adjusted before the best volume could be achieved. Again, the object was to get as much as possible of the material's surface to vibrate. If only part of the material, or just the edges vibrated, the sound would not be satisfying.

Exactly the same is true of the human vocal cords. It is actually quite simple if you think about it. If you want to produce a better sound, you have to make as much of the vocal cords vibrate as possible. And you have to stretch them tightly. As the candy wrapper-whistle, the tighter you stretch, the more powerful the sound. FULL-SIZED, FLEXIBLE CORDS ARE NECESSARY FOR A FULL, STRONG VOICE.

Fortunately there exists, in connection with vocal cords, certain muscles which, when developed, will strengthen the cords' stretching muscles and give them a larger vibrating area. To speak or sing, the vocal cords must be stretched. Loose or slack cords can emit no more sound than slack violin strings. Thick cords, while more desirable than thin cords, are naturally heavier and therefore difficult to stretch. But if one wants to emit a large or powerful sound, the cords must be stretched. Additional strength is needed to do this stretching. Remember that human muscle is elastic, and just like the muscles of any athlete or gymnast, if you exercise them in the right manner, they can be made stronger and developed. How will you go about stretching the Vocal Cords?

... Next month. [www.perfect-voice.com](http://www.perfect-voice.com)

