

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2007

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*There is nothing better than singing.
Singing is freedom.
Singing is joy.
Singing is friendship.
And singing is relaxing.*

*I can sing in any mood.
When I sing all my troubles disappear.
Nothing else allows me to do this.
This is why I believe in the power of singing.*

Nalini Margaitis

BCS Alumnae

This poem is from the Boston City Singers "The Goodwill Tour" booklet 2007.

Some members of our choir attended the performance by these 50 young singers of the Boston City Singers. It was the first time the group had travelled overseas. Their choral presentation was wonderful to hear and highly skilled.

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Wangaratta U3A is considering offering a short course in music notation and rhythm if enough people apply and a tutor is available for the required days.

Two sessions may be scheduled for the month of October within these dates - 29th, 30th or 31st.

U3A asks for expressions of interest from choir members or any of your friends.

Contact Anne Bittner, Secretary U3A or Janet Wigg, Assistant Secretary U3A if Anne is unavailable.



The Max Parkinson Lodge performance has been postponed until sometime in September on a Thursday morning, due to the previous date being unsuitable. The new date will be notified later.

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A TEST JUST FOR FUN

In order to measure your level of proficiency as a choir member, the following test has been carefully developed by experts. Read and reflect on each situation and then select the option that will enhance the quality of the experience.

- 1 ***You are entering the choir loft on Sunday morning and suddenly trip and fall down. You should:***
 - a –Assume a kneeling position and break into fervent prayer.
 - b –Pretend that you've had a heart attack.
 - c –Crawl into the nearest chair.
 - d –Crawl quietly out of the church.

- 2 ***You are a soprano and count incorrectly. As a result you boom out a high "C" one measure too soon. You should:***
 - a –Slide into an inspired "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing".
 - b –Look triumphant and hold on to the note.
 - c –Stop abruptly in mid squawk but keep your lips moving.
 - d –Sink to the floor in shame.

- 3 ***After all those long hard choir rehearsals, you show up twenty minutes late for the Christmas musical. You should:***
 - a –Climb quietly into the back row of the choir.
 - b –Enter pretending to be a soundman checking cables and then suddenly slip yourself into the choir.
 - c –Turn the lights out in the church and slip into the choir during the blackout.
 - d –Read M Stephen's pamphlet "Techniques for Tardy appearances".

- 4 ***While singing, you discover you have only one page of a two page hymn. You should:***
 - a –Hum for your life.
 - b –Sing "watermelon, watermelon, watermelon".
 - c –Try to get another hymnal out of the choir rack with you feet.
 - d –Sing the first page over again.

- 5 ***Inevitably that dreaded big sneeze occurs toward the end of the choir special. You should:***
 - a –As you sneeze, come down hard on your neighbour's foot to create a diversion.
 - b –Try to make it harmonize.
 - c –Sneeze into the hair of the choir member in front of you to muffle the noise.
 - d –Sink to the floor in shame.

SCORING:

Count the number of a's, b's, c's, and d's you checked and find your proficiency rating below:

4 or more a's There is nothing more you need to know to be a first rate choir member.

4 or more b's Your church choir reflexes are fully developed and you should do well in choir.

4 or more c's Your church choral experience is spotty but your team spirit is on target. You will be an asset to most any choir.

4 or more d's It is recommended you take soccer or group therapy counselling.

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Continued notes from “The World Encyclopaedia of Musical Instruments” – Max Wade-Matthews:

Opera

The birth of opera between 1575 and 1625 resulted in an entirely new kind of singer.

The Madrigal singer had a relatively limited range, rarely exceeding an octave and a half.

Opera Singers began to extend their range both up and down, to accommodate the composers who were experimenting in new forms of vocal music, just as instrument makers were experimenting in the construction of musical instruments.

Voice Production

Singing styles & techniques before the advent of sound recordings are even harder to study than instrumental playing styles, as once the singer has died, their voice is forever lost. There is no surviving instrument to help with research into the lost sound.

Although styles of singing changed, the Italian method of voice production, known as “bel canto” (beautiful singing) remained the same from the time of Monteverdi to that of Rossini. The main characteristic of “bel canto” voice production is the forward- placing of the voice, with a concentration of resonance in the nasal cavities to give a light, florid effect.

In the 20th Century there were two main developments in singing.
One is the “verismo”, or realistic style, as perfected by Enrico Caruso (1872 – 1921).

Operatic composers around 1900 – particularly Italians such as Pietro Mascagni (1863 – 1945) and Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924) began to write operas with more contemporary, realistic plots, for which the artifice of the traditional “bel canto” vocal style was unsuitable.

The second development was due to the invention of electronic amplification. Until the 1920’s there was little difference between classical and popular singing. However, as popular singers began to use microphones, new singing styles developed.

There was now no need to project the voice as before. Because it was easier for sound engineers to amplify a soft voice, early radio performers who sang with light, intimate voices were preferred.

The next newsletter will go on with the development of choirs:-

*“Let the pealing organ blow
to the full-voiced quire below.
In service high and anthems clear” - John Milton (1608 – 74).*

A painting in a 14th Century manuscript shows 5 French church choir singers sharing a single manuscript copy of their text and musical line resting on a type of sloped pulpit.

