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30 YEARS
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CONTENTS

6 INTONATION FOR CHOIRS
   by Robert Hollingworth

10 A CHORAL CURIOSITY

11 OUR SINGING ELDERS
   by Dr Faye Dumont

15 ANCA STRATEGIC PLANNING
   by Graham Sattler

17 SO YOU WANT TO SING WITH I FAGIOLINI?

18 THE POWER OF SONG
   (THE BIG SING)
   by Rachel Hore & Bobby Maher

20 AGEING VOICES
   by Dr Kathleen McGuire

22 NEWS FROM ANCA CHAPTERS
   South Australia, Western Australia & Queensland

Photo by: David Holifield on Unsplash
I would like to open my 2021 first issue of Sing Out message with a thankyou to all our ANCA members who have given National Council and myself support over the last few weeks. The last 12 months have been a roller-coaster ride but I am hoping that 2021 will take a better course from here on.

We have an exciting year planned for ANCA and we look forward to sharing many of those details in this issue and through our E-newsletters. I would like to welcome Emily Dittman and team from Admin for the Arts to our National Office. Emily has been associated with the choral world for many years and we look forward to having her in the ANCA Admin team.

The members of ANCA's National Council have been actively involved in heavily packed strategy days over the last two months, working towards a relatable and sustainable future in our 21st century cultural landscape. The Australian choral field is different today than it was 30 years ago. This organization came about through the combination of two established choral associations operating in different regions of Australia. The people leading those two organizations realized that there was strength in working together to support all choral life in our country. I would like to personally thank all of those who have been active and involved with ANCA over the last 30 years of its existence. After studying and working overseas, I returned to Australia knowing that the rich make-up of our choral scene is something to be proud of.

Getting back to the work achieved over the Strategy days, those on National Council (your State Presidents representing each of your interests) realize that in our rapidly changing world, ANCA needs to adapt and develop. It needs to represent the variety of singers and conductors that make up the membership. It needs to provide events that are relevant and required by our singers, conductors, educators, composers, and researchers. It needs to value the variety of choirs from Australia's professional ensembles, to the groups of singers that are united through their love of singing as they combat their journey through dementia or cancer treatment, and all of the singing groups that exist in between.

At the centre of our new strategic plan is our Vision Statement: “An Australia that sings as one.” Our mission to build a choral culture for this country is going to be at the forefront of everything we do. In many other countries, singing is an integral part of people’s lives. Singing can be such an important part of a person’s wellbeing, it allows one to feel a sense of place and belonging, it instils a discipline in young singers to work towards a performance on stage, it can bring joy to one’s life and cross cultural boundaries in our understanding of the world. I know I am preaching to the converted for those that are reading this message, so I would like to challenge our members to go and spread the word to those in your community. We want our membership to reach even further to include all ages, all vocations, and all walks of life. ANCA is particularly looking at growing its membership with teachers, both music teachers and general classroom teachers. We have purposefully directed our Webinar topics in our 30th Anniversary Webinar series to the needs of teachers who have been asked to conduct a choir without much warning. This sounds like a dream come true to me, but to some it is not.

Our main membership renewal period is coming up at the end of May and we look forward to sharing with you some of our membership specials for our 30th year. Our new deals have been created from the results of our members survey from last year. I am very excited about the path that ANCA is about to journey along. In my eyes, it is more relevant and vibrant and will build an Australia that sings as one. I look forward to you joining us on this journey and assisting in spreading the word about the benefit and values of singing, particularly singing within a community.

Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié

President

Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié

President’s Message

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Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié
I t’s quite an achievement! ANCA celebrates its 30th birthday this year. Our leadership – National Council and the State Chapter Committees – have been working hard to plan a range of events and developments that will build on the first 30 years and look towards a bright and promising future. Later in this issue you will find more information about some of the plans (as well as the process for long-term planning) amongst several reports of news from the Chapters. Not least of the developments is the transition to digital distribution of Sing Out. Many of you have opted for this way of receiving the national magazine. One of the new features available to our digital readers is that, by clicking on the link, you can go directly to other material on the internet. It is, of course, still possible to receive “hard” copies by post. However you get to read Sing Out, I hope you will share it with fellow members of the choral “scene” and – please – take the opportunity to provide feedback to the editorial team.

• Do you like the changes we have made to the “look”?
• Tell us what you think of the articles already published.
• Are there topics you would like to see explored in future issues?

And, as always, help ANCA to broaden and deepen its feeling of community by telling us what you are doing. (If you do submit an article, please take note of the advice and deadline dates at the bottom of the column entitled “2021 Deadlines”.)

Leading the pack in this issue is a must-read on intonation by Robert Hollingworth. Not simply about not going flat, this is a serious explanation of the factors that make choral (and most non-keyboard) music so exciting and satisfying. And there is information about how to hear this in practice by listening to I Fagiolini, Robert’s wonderful vocal ensemble.

If you look carefully, you will discern another theme in this issue. Faye Dumont reminds us of the special care required in the nurturing of our senior singers, while Kathleen McGuire and Haydn examine ways of doing that. Congratulations to ANCA on its important anniversary. As we all celebrate in our distinct ways, I hope we can all stay safe, carefully observing the advice provided by the proper health authorities, but still singing out with enthusiasm and joy.

Noel Ancell OAM

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A recorder player colleague of mine who had studied for years and learnt subtle things about articulation and recorder timbre recounts taking his instruments to Peru to research playing styles of indigenous tribes there to be met with a totally different style – or rather ‘attitude’ – to playing whereby simply playing as loudly as you possibly could (overblowing and producing colour that way) was the main pleasure. Similarly in choral singing an over-focus on technical aspects can become the end game if you’re not careful. Some professional choirs have become so good at the tuning thing that other important aspects seem relegated to the status of also-rans. Who teaches about expression in choral singing? We may think we’re doing it but is it coming across? Similarly enunciation – this is hugely undervalued. Is ‘spitting out the consonants’ enough or actually counter-productive to good singing?

I seem to have digressed.

Tuning – why is it an issue at all?

I once wrote, “In a solo-voice ensemble, the singer is completely responsible for tuning their own line, managing it over the ever-shifting sands of other singers’ notes and vowel sounds.” That sounds impressive but why can’t you just sing ‘in tune’ and that’s that?

This begs the question, what is ‘in tune’? As musicians, surely we all know when an interval is in tune? Yet we’ve all sat there in rehearsals and argued about who is sharp or flat or felt helpless when our choir goes regularly flat in a particular piece or perhaps a particular rehearsal space.

To start (very briefly) at the beginning, what is a note?

A note is the human perception of a sound produced by a fixed number of vibrations per second, whether vibrations of a violin string, lips on metal of a brass instrument, a vacuum cleaner motor or our own vocal folds. The ear channels these vibrations which are then turned into electrical signals in the brain. In 1938 (only then) it was decided that what we all referred to as ‘A above middle C’ would have a fixed pitch: 440 vibrations a second. Before then, it was a little different depending on where you were, what pitch certain fixed instruments had been built at, etc; but that’s another story.

If we start our car and without leaving first gear drive until we hit an engine note of A440 (a nice middle soprano

Robert Hollingworth is founder-director of British vocal ensemble, I Fagiolini, and has spent much of his life thinking about how to present music of a different time and context to contemporary audiences. He has also directed the English Concert, Academy of Ancient Music, BBC Concert Orchestra and some of the world’s finest chamber choirs including NDR Chor, BBC Singers, RIAS Kammerchor, Capella Cracoviensis, VOCES8 and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble. He’s Artistic Director of Stour Music and Reader in Music at the University of York where he directs ‘The 24’ and runs an MA in Solo-Voice Ensemble Singing. He likes Monteverdi and Monty Python.
A), we can be sure that something in the engine is vibrating at 440 times a second. (Also that we’ve probably just done irreparable damage to the car.) If we only drive until we hit the A an octave below that (nice baritone A) then the engine was vibrating at 220 times a second. If we barely get out of the drive and only hit the A an octave below that, it’ll be moving at 110 a second.

The reason those different A notes sound nice together (and we’re only really interested because they sound nice) is because of the simple mathematical relationship between them: 2:1 (220 vibrations per second to 110) or 4:1 (440:110). Trillions of air molecules are vibrating in a simple mathematical relationship. (Is now a good time to tell you I failed my physics exam at school?)

If you play a note at A440 and simultaneously a slightly higher version at 441, amazingly our ears can hear the difference as a pulse or a ‘beat’ every second – or, at A440 and A442, two beats a second etc. That’s why when we’re tuning an instrument, we hear a series of beats between two notes (wa wa wa wa) that gradually get fewer per second until they disappear when we hit the right frequency.

We’ve dealt with doubling the number of vibrations (or frequency), but what about the 110 multiples between? 330/550/660 etc vibrations per second (I’ve only got 2000 words so can we call them Hertz and not get confused with car hire?) What notes do they produce?

Here’s a nice table of all the multiples of 110 that you’ll ever need.

Note that after the initial octave, we get a perfect 5th (a-e’), a perfect 4th (e’-a’) then a major 3rd (a’ - c#’).

Play all those notes together and you get a perfect A major chord – but they have to be laid out in that order (composers note). If you put the C# down an octave, it won’t sound so nice because the 550Hz would change to 275 and that’s not a simple multiple of the fundamental 110.

You’ll notice that the intervals in the harmonic series get smaller as you go up. But our brain hears any two of these notes together as consonant because as a species we seem to like consonance, though this can be cultural. But we can hear the difference and this is how we know that something is out of tune (except the singer on your left who frankly hasn’t a clue).

So what’s the problem?

The problem is keyboards. When you’re tuning a keyboard instrument, you can tune A first and then all the other As to it. Perfect. Then perhaps tune the E (the fifth to A) – a fifth being the lowest non-octave interval in the harmonic series: tune it to 330, a pure 5th. Then, knowing that the ratio between any fifth is 3:2 (like 330/220) you can confidently tune the next fifth pure E - B. And round you go, B – F# - C# - G# - D# - A# - E# (F) – B# (C) – F## (G) – C## (D) and finally back to A (G##). All your fifths are perfect intervals: there’s just one problem. By the time you get back to your starting point, A (G##) it’s not the A you started with but something a little higher – the two ends of the circle don’t meet. We call the difference a ‘syntonic comma’. If A isn’t the same as G##, who cares? We rarely use those notes. But by extension Eb isn’t the same thing as D#: G# is different from Ab.

Until the 17th century this didn’t matter much. No-one played in keys with more than two flats or sharps so you didn’t need the tuning circle to meet – though where it did theoretically meet (e.g. Db-G# for example) the interval was so bad that it would howl (they called it the ‘wolf’ interval).

But once you start playing in keys that require more accidentals (viz Bach’s 48 Preludes and Fugues) you need a compromise. One is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>110Hz</th>
<th>220Hz</th>
<th>330Hz</th>
<th>440Hz</th>
<th>550Hz</th>
<th>660Hz</th>
<th>770Hz</th>
<th>880Hz</th>
<th>990Hz</th>
<th>1100Hz</th>
<th>1210Hz</th>
<th>1320Hz</th>
</tr>
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**TABLE – harmonic series in A**
‘equal temperament’ where all pure intervals have been tweaked a little bit to allow the circle to meet so that your starting A is the same as A/G♯ after all the fifths are tuned. It’s like putting up a fence, starting with the two ends and then having to cut a tiny bit of each panel to fit to the length of your garden. The result is a sort of tuning onesy as opposed to the tailor-made suit of just intonation (pure intervals). And we have to work with this system whenever we perform with pianos or organs.

But all is not lost. When we sing a cappella, we don’t have to bend our intervals out of pure. We can try to sing everything as pure as possible, in theory allowing our Eb to be higher than our D♯ if required because we’re not singing both at the same time. But we need to know what the pitfalls are and I’m nearly out of words so quick precis.

A pure major 3rd (that ratio of 5:4 – 550Hz to 440Hz in our harmonic series above) is lower than the one on the piano – by a 6th of a semitone. That’s a lot. So we need to aim a little lower on major thirds than we’re used to. Eg. In A major, the C♯ on the top needs to go down a bit.

A pure minor 3rd (this is actually trickier as there are a couple to choose from in the harmonic series but let’s say 6:5) is higher than the one on the piano – also by a 6th of a semitone: also a lot. So we need to aim a little higher on minor thirds than with a keyboard. In A minor, that C natural on the top needs to go down a bit.

Various rules of thumb flow from this.

Given that sharpened notes often sit on the top of a major 3rd (F♯ over D, C♯ - A, G♯ - E etc), keep your sharps low. Similarly, as flats sit on the top of a minor 3rd (Bb over G, Eb – C etc) and we need minor 3rds higher than on the piano, keep your flats high. (Aaargh, this is the opposite of everything I ever thought…)

Small tones. If a major 3rd is smaller than you’re used to, then the two tones that make it up must be smaller too. I teach my choir The 24 (at the University of York) to think small melodic tones – and to practice sliding from one note to the next until it appears in focus. This is particularly important in joyful pieces where enthusiasm tends to produce wide tones.

Semitones. Within any one key, melodic semitones should generally be larger than on the piano. In a normal scale with six tones and two semitones, if the tones are all now smaller, (see above) the semitones have more room. Think of it as eight consecutive seats on an underground train). In our A major, example if the C♯ is lower than we’re used to, then the semitone to reach D will have to be a bit bigger. Similarly, the G♯ leading note sits low at the top of the major third over E and will therefore have a long way to go to reach A. Moral: semitones manspread.

However what if your semitone uses an accidental not in your key signature, in A Major say C♯ - C natural (call it a chromatic semitone). If the chord is moving from A Major to A minor, the C♯ was already low (as the major 3rd) and the C natural high, as the minor third. So the gap between them must be small. Or think of it as the diatonic semitone eating up most of the space (D-C♯) leaving very little for the
chromatic semitone (C#-C). In non-Covid times, this could be a good game to play with your choirs with eight chairs...

I’m afraid there’s one final issue and I’d much prefer to show this live but here we go.

As didgeridoo fans and other instrumentalists know, each note (let’s stick with A110Hz) produces at the same time a series of sympathetic vibrations above it at multiples of the fundamental – as per the harmonic series above. This is especially relevant to singers because when a bass (for example) sings that low A, by moving his tongue and lips around, he can strengthen different harmonics in the series. Try singing WOW very slowly on one note. What you perhaps hear as different vowels are in fact reinforcements of different notes in the series. (This is what a vowel is and as a species we are phenomenally good at hearing them).

But hang on, you say. Play a piano low A2 (110Hz) and mid-soprano C#5 (550Hz) at the top. The piano has been tuned at equal temperaments, so the C# will actually be sounding at c.554 Hz. Won’t the sung top note at A554 clash (subtly but audibly) with the 5th harmonic coming off the bass (at 550Hz)? YES. It’ll produce just over 4 beats per second and we’ll hear this as out of tune. If a choir is doing this on an o vowel (as in ‘hot’) that bass fifth harmonic will be very strong and so the beat will be quite noticeable. A good way to hear this at home is to play the low A (110Hz) on the piano, to listen for the soprano C# in the resonance and then gently play the soprano C# (554Hz) and listen for the beat. In a choir, the more blade or rasp on the sound your basses have (i.e. the more harmonics they’re producing,) the more important it is to tune to them.

Extension thought for keen students: each note is also a ‘fundamental note’ and wherever its harmonics meet another sung note or a harmonic from another sung note, there will be issues of tuning. Listen to Barbershop quartets for some really knowing examples of this.

Lest this all make you want to give up, just start with the major and minor third rules. If you can even start to get to grips with that, you’ll be doing well!

Finally I deal with this a little bit in I Fagiolini’s Youtube series, ‘Sing The Score’. a) if you haven’t dipped into these yet, please do because they’re fun and they also involve a quite poor Richie Benaud imitation most weeks (always talking about choral music) and b) No.7 shows some examples of pure intervals as opposed to the dirty ones we’ve come used to hearing from our dear keyboard-playing friends. www.ifagiolini.com/SingTheScore

**EDITOR’S NOTE**

To find out more, investigate


### What is asynchronous choral music?

Asynchronous choral performance uses a level of aleatoric or ‘chance music’ techniques where strict rhythm, entries, cut-offs, and sometimes tempo are not precisely determined for the ensemble, but decided upon by each individual singer. A richness of texture results from this fun technique building tone clusters, creating rhythmic murmur or chatter, and sections that may morph from one to another. Performances of the same piece vary each time. The pieces in *Out of Time* can be performed live or over the internet making it perfect for choirs who are in lockdown or singing socially distanced. Significantly, a choir performing and rehearsing music from *Out of Time* is not reliant on subsequent editing to create ensemble (for example, Eric Whitacre’s evocative works), but is making music together in real time, having a rewarding group musical experience.

Edited by Diana Blom and Brett McKern, the repertoire in the two volumes of *Out of Time* was written with texts and moods to suit the asynchronous textures. Volume 1 comprises sacred works setting Biblical and other texts and a setting of the Evensong canticles. The secular works in Volume 2 have varied subjects from alfresco dining, to the seething cauldron of Shakespeare’s witches in *Macbeth*, to music itself. Sample pages are available online, the volumes can be purchased as hard copy or instant PDF downloads, and the pieces are available individually. Visit [https://www.australiancomposers.com.au/products/copy-of-out-of-time-volume-2](https://www.australiancomposers.com.au/products/copy-of-out-of-time-volume-2).

This lament from an elderly individual recognises the consoling power of song. Of course, we are more accustomed to major (symphonic) choral works from Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), but towards the end of his own life he wrote nine part-songs – all simple and mostly secular settings for four voices and keyboard (readily accessible to smaller choirs).

The full set is as follows:

Der Augenblick (The Moment); Die Harmonie in der Ehe (Harmony in Marriage); Alles hat seine Zeit (Everything has its time); Die Beredsamkeit (eloquence); Der Greis (the Old Man); Die Warnung (Warning); Wider den Übermut (Against High Spirits); Aus dem Danklied zu Gott (From a Hymn of Thanks); and Abendlied zu Gott (Goodnight, God).

Clean transcriptions (in the public domain) can be found by searching for the German title at http://www.cpdl.org/wiki/

Der Greis – The Old Man

All my strength, alas! is gone,
Old and weak I’m grown;
Scarce can mirth, or sparkling wine,
Rouse my joys supine.
Rosy health, now fled,
warms my cheeks no more!
Cold death
summons at my door;
Without dread I meet my guest,
Heav’n! O heav’n! be bless’d.

As a fine harmonious song,
Roll’d my course along.
Healthy aging is not just allowing people more years but the possibility of productive and socially enjoyable senior lives; and not just a way to fill out the days but opportunity to make a satisfying contribution to society. Some of these elders are musicians; and some of these are choristers. In the choral community they deserve our enthusiastic and respectful consideration as a significant part of the choral population.

Older singers may provide a proportion of community choirs and the backbone of church choirs, the larger numbers in ensembles such as Welsh choirs, or may make up the full numbers in designated mature age ensembles such as U3A choirs and those formed in retirement villages. The singers will tell you that they love choir, that it gives them a joyous opportunity to be expressive, to learn more about music, culture and the voice, and that it provides a social group of like-minded musicians, among which they may have deep friendships. They will say that they are happy to share their music-making with their family, friends.
and the community, and that they are glad to be of service in offering their music if a civic or social occasion arises.

Knowledge of the functioning of the voice has taken leaps from the 1960’s onward, especially since internal examination of the vocal process has become possible. It was not until the 1990’s that specialized attention was given to the mature-age voice. Year by year, now, new science is adding to understanding of that changing voice. It is important for conductors to have a current knowledge of the voice and of the stages of singing of the choristers facing them. It may be that the senior choristers are reliant on you for the support and information that will keep them singing joyously for years to come. This knowledge may also inform the preparation of warm-ups, the selection of repertoire and the running of your rehearsals and concerts.

Aging of the vocal mechanism is inevitable, as part of the aging process. Here are some issues of which your seniors may be aware:

**GENERAL HEALTH**

- Digestion issues, allergies and gastroesophageal reflux, which can affect the voice
- Change in bone structure in the face, and loss of natural teeth
- Vision problems, from the annoyance of bifocals to need to have large-print music
- Hearing problems – about a third of over-seventies will need assisted hearing, and may be surrounded by distorted sound in the choir
- Body alignment issues, including curvature of the spine
- Chronic ailments such as heart disease, diabetes and arthritis
- Slower response from neural pathways; reduced blood flow throughout the body; and dehydration from drying medications.

Some conductor support may include: advice to visit a doctor; encouragement of the singer to take singing lessons anew to learn to work with the changing body and changing voice; placement of the singer in the choir to respect vision and hearing issues; encouragement to bring a bottle of water to rehearsal; and a chair available for some sitting, some standing.

Warm-ups with stretching, bending, turning, arm and shoulder movement and body alignment for standing and sitting will be beneficial. If an individual is unable to do an exercise let them be, do the exercise with the others and accept that the person will come in with the next exercise.

**BREATH MANAGEMENT**

Considerable change is taking place in the rib cage (thorax) and singers will be aware that they cannot manage some of the long or slow vocal passages that they used to be able sing.

- The rib cage is stiffening and will lose some of its past expansion (distensibility); and the cartilages and ribs will become bone (calcify) so will be less agile than previously
- The abdominal muscle tone will decrease
- The lung (pulmonary) function will have less muscle elasticity, and there will be less chest wall compliance and tissue recoil
- There will be a decrease in breath (respiratory) volume
- There will be a decrease in amount of new air in the breath (vital capacity) and an increase in retained, used air (residual volume).

Seniors will likely have lost 40% of the past natural breath. The conductor will advisedly have several breathing exercises in warm-ups and may encourage singers to use these when beginning home rehearsals. For the seniors, encouragement to do these exercises most days of the week will assist in retaining breath, or slowing down rate of change in breathing skill, or may even make breathing improvements. The conductor may also chat through the music with senior singers and find judicious places for extra breaths. Posture imbalance will affect the breath, so occasional reminders during rehearsal about body balance will assist in full breath intake and may avoid vocal fatigue.

**CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE LARYNX (VOICE BOX)**

- The cartilages and joints will be turning into bone (complete in the 80’s)
- The joints may become arthritic and stiffen
- The cricoarytenoid joint may become eroded, resulting in reduced glottal closure and uneven vocal fold vibration
- The ligaments (connective tissues between bone and cartilage) may weaken
- The larynx position in the neck will move downward into the 80’s
- There may be deterioration in the temporomandibular joint (hinge of cranium and jaw).

Some discomfort from the above may benefit from medical advice, and the conductor may well suggest this if she/he notes that a singer is frowning as if in stress or rubbing an ear or jaw as if there is an ache. In general, the singers may not be as flexible in movement as in the past, but warm-up exercises freeing the neck and loosening up the jaw may help.

**MUSCLES AND FUNCTION OF THE LARYNX (VOICE BOX)**

Senior singers may be frustrated that their voice does not sound, to them, like it used to do. It may help them to understand, and work with their current voice, if they are aware of the considerable alterations taking place in the muscles of the larynx.

The loss of bulk in the vocal folds themselves is due to thinning in their components. The vocal folds have “three parts” to them:

- The skin (epithelium) of the folds, which becomes drier and less elastic (compare a new and an old rubber band?)
- The lamina propria is the middle layer, and is itself in three parts: THE TOP (superficial) layer, will become thinner, with fibrous portions altered, reducing elasticity
THE MIDDLE (intermediate) layer, will also become less thick, with changes to the contour of the fibrous protein, and less elasticity

THE DEEPEST (and closest to the muscle) layer, whose fibrous portion will be denser

The vocalis muscle – the deep, large body of the vocal fold.

In summary, the flexible tissues responsible for vocal fold vibration become thinner, stiffer and less pliable.

The vocal folds, in weakened state, also may not exactly come together, leaving a gap. The gap will result in breathy sound. As with voices at other ages there may also be cysts or polyps with which to contend. These issues may be treated by therapy or, at last resort, surgery, and definitely should be in the hands of a voice specialist.

Neural degeneration is likely in many older people, which may affect the firing rate of the nerves supplying the vocal folds and lead to irregular fold vibration and difficulty controlling vibrato (e.g. displaying as a tremolo or a wobble).

We are fortunate to live at a time when many in medicine are giving their research and expertise to the aging voice (the term is Presbyphonia, for those who like specialist names for medical studies). The conductor’s voice (for those who like professional names for medical studies) is certainly controlled vibrato (e.g. displaying as a tremolo or a wobble).

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The vocal folds, in weakened state, also may not exactly come together, leaving a gap. The gap will result in breathy sound. As with voices at other ages there may also be cysts or polyps with which to contend. These issues may be treated by therapy or, at last resort, surgery, and definitely should be in the hands of a voice specialist.

Neural degeneration is likely in many older people, which may affect the firing rate of the nerves supplying the vocal folds and lead to irregular fold vibration and difficulty controlling vibrato (e.g. displaying as a tremolo or a wobble).

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For conductors:

- Consider the mature-age singers you have before you. They will have knowledge that comes from life experiences different to yours – maybe even more wisdom! They might know things if you ask them. They might gladly research works, composers, even the lighting and acoustics of the local hall, if you see them as compatriots.

- Know that every one of these seniors will carry grief. They will have lost a partner, friends, even children. Their singing is rich in emotional understanding. Teach the spirit of the works – your commitment to interpretation will fall on grateful minds and empathetic spirits.

- Respect special needs. Seniors will be glad to work with you if you make it possible for them to do so.

- Know that there will be some stick-in-the-muds who do not adjust easily to change. “It never used to be done like that.” Easing them into change will require diplomacy and persistence from you – as will courteous determination when you wish to do different repertoire from the old days. Best wishes for grace and sticking to your guns!

For singing teachers:

- Take senior singers into your singing studio. They will greatly benefit from learning at this stage in life, when the voice is making one of its most significant transitions. Explanations will help. Exercises will help. Your listening ear will help. Your reward will be to give great enrichment to all-through-life learners.

- As with the voice at other life stages, gain knowledge of the older voice. There is much new information available; and the singers themselves will teach you much.

- In practical terms consider this too. The young may forget to practice, forget to turn up and forget to pay. Seniors are much more likely, in making the commitment, to practice, to turn up and to pay!
Mid-January 2021 was a dynamic time for ANCA National planning, and as the facilitator of the first ever ANCA Strategic Plan, I enjoyed a thoroughly collaborative and truly enthusiastic process that, in my opinion, has resulted in a robust and inclusive framework for the organisation’s foreseeable future. It should then develop into a strategic springboard for subsequent plans. Members of both National Council and the State Chapter Committees were incredibly generous with their time and engaged fully, offering great insight and demonstrating a real appetite for an inclusive and realistic, member-focused, organisational future.

The sessions followed a great deal of consultation, carried through from the initial October 2020 planning process, and were held over two very full days. They comprised detailed discussion and sharing of local and national aims, objectives and realistic expectations; all linked to the historical values and projected place and function of ANCA over the immediate and mid-term future. At every point of the discussion and drafting process, consideration was given to the interests of all stakeholders.

My role, as facilitator, started with reviewing all the relevant documentation. This consisted in the main of a session outline and notes from the October 2020 planning day, the ANCA Constitution and data from the recent member survey. We also benefited from a potted history of the organisational structure, membership breakdown, and regular state and national activities. I then proposed a Strategic Plan model, shared a few samples with the Council and the DRAFT 1 Framework was ready for the first stage of input.

In essence, the January 14 (phase one) planning day started with the following premise:

- to establish the purpose, place and term of the Strategic Plan,
- to work in concert with the ANCA Constitution, and
- to provide for annual business planning

While the ANCA Constitution provides the operational rules of the organisation, very much standardised for our type of organisation (an incorporated association), the Strategic Plan is our opportunity to identify – for ourselves – why we exist, and how and what we want to achieve our aims and objectives within those rules. The Constitution need not change unless there are legislative (external) or structural governance/administrative changes (internal). The Strategic Plan, though, is usually set to a 3- to 5-year term, to allow for review and reshaping as aims and objectives develop, and achievements and developments progress.

We commenced with identifying where the organisation wants to be in the future, and how it is going to get there. The strategic part of the planning being recognition of the potential for, and indeed likelihood of, change - both in the organisation and in its external environment - and how those changes could affect the future.

It was agreed that the broad structure of the plan would be:

- The organisational Vision statement – the big picture - how we would like to see our future;
- The Mission statement – the organisation’s purpose - what it is broadly speaking that we see ourselves doing to achieve the Vision;

Graham Sattler is a singer, trombonist, artistic director, musical inclusion innovator, educator and academic. Graham holds a PhD, M.Performance (Conducting), Dip.Opera, Grad.Cert-Psychology of Risk, and is a 2019 Churchill Fellow. He regularly presents at international Music Education conferences and is a member of the Australian and International Societies for Music Education, Asia Pacific Community Music Network, Regional Music Research Group, and editorial boards of the International Journal of Community Music and Music in Australia Knowledge Base. Graham has been CEO of Mitchell Conservatorium since 2014.
• Our role – our specific place in achieving the above;
• Our Values – the core priorities in the organisation’s culture, what drives members’ priorities and how they truly act in the organisation;
• Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats;
• The Domains – the comprehensive list of areas of strategic activity we want to impact (often referred to as Key Performance Areas);
• Our Projects – often referred to as Key Performance Indicators (KPI) or Measures (KPM), these are the measurables, the ’what’ of the plan – they breakdown and serve the Domains;
• The Aims and Objectives of those Projects; and, finally,
• The actions that will address and measure achievement of the Projects.

Once that structure was agreed, we moved to the next phase of the planning, which occupied a very full January 17. That Sunday saw a terrific level of participation from National Council and Chapter Committee members.

Through consensus as the decision-making process, rather than majority rule, we achieved a more inclusive and shared outcome. This in my opinion, is the key to a practical and mutually respectful process.

Consensus, being an agreement that everyone can live with the decisions:
• requires participation from all group members, including those with minority opinions. (whereas majority rule does not require a collective agreement)
• enables all group members to be invested in the chosen outcome (majority rule may result in those in the minority feeling left out of the decision-making process).
• requires an environment that is conducive to healthy discourse (majority rule does not require the same level of interaction, and may allow members to keep their beliefs private, if they so choose)

So... the next step? The ANCA DRAFT 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan will soon be circulated more broadly for stakeholder comment and discussion before the final version is adopted.

An annual business plan (the next stage of the organisation’s planning) would then be developed to detail which elements of the Strategic Plan are to be achieved within the 12-month period, by whom, and at what cost.

**RICHARD GILL’S ALLELUIA**

Many of us will have met and admired the late Richard Gill AO. He made a huge and consistent contribution to the arts in this country, especially in the fields of music education and opera. *Sing Out* is proud to publish this little round he wrote as a “warm-up” exercise. We are grateful to his widow, Maureen, for permission to do so and also for her permission for us all to copy and use it.

*Photo courtesy of Victorian Opera*

Alleluia

Richard Gill

\[ \text{Alleluia, alleluiaa, alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia.} \]

\[ \text{Alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia.} \]

\[ \text{Alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia, alleluiia.} \]
Thanks to a continuing project by this amazing ensemble, you can sing with them with just the latter two of these qualities (at least: the others would be helpful, too).

I Fagiolini is a British vocal consort (one voice per part), specialising in early and contemporary music. Currently Ensemble-in-Residence at the University of York, they are internationally renowned for their innovative productions. Since their foundation in 1986, they have released 23 CDs and 5 films.

Signature projects have included The Full Monteverdi by John La Bouchardière; Tallis in Wonderland, a new way of hearing polyphony with live and recorded voices; Simunye, the South African collaboration; How Like An Angel (HLAA), with Australian contemporary circus company C!RCA for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and performed at the Perth International Arts Festival, New York and in cathedrals across Europe; and Betrayal: a polyphonic crime drama (with John La Bouchardière), an immersive theatre piece sung to the music of Gesualdo with dancers and singers set in ‘crime scenes’.

Their latest undertaking is a series entitled #SingTheScore, which so far consists of 23 video presentations of music by composers ranging from Monteverdi and Purcell to South African contemporary Bheka Dlamini. Each twelve- to thirty-minute episode ends with a full performance of the focus piece, with the full score appearing on-screen so that we can all sing along. The first part of each presentation provides in-depth discussion of the piece, its background, meaning and techniques, every idea clearly and cleverly illustrated with highlighted extracts from the score as well as sound bites (sometimes at “learning” speed). It is high-octane musicology, but presented with Hollingworth’s signature (and very English) sense of fun. Expect puns, glimpses from classic films, interruptions by family members, in-jokes, more puns and funny voices – all beautifully brought together to make a satisfying, perhaps addictive, artistic experience.

You will learn important music history, you will be helped to understand the mysteries of intonation and the sensitivity of your ears will increase. Or you can just sit back and enjoy some very beautiful singing. You can find this garden of delights at www.ifagiolini.com/SingTheScore

Bear in mind that these are musicians who need to pay the rent: there is no paywall on the series, but donations are encouraged.

Their latest is a short film entitled The Stag Hunt, based on Jannequin’s La Chasse. To stream the full version will cost you SAU5.31 or thereabouts, but some of it goes to the Born Free charity. For more information, go to https://www.ifagiolini.com/thestaghuntfilm/
I love the sounds of the ancient world. I like to listen to the sound of the old chanting songs. It connects me back to the timeless land, and the land that only the spirits walk. It teaches me to listen with my heart. My heart opens and releases my spirit, deep into the land. It sings and dances as it goes deep into the land. The knowledge fills my heart, songs of the land. The songs make me dance with the wind’ (Theresa Penangke Alice in Arelhekenhe Angkentye, Women’s Talk, 2020)

Imagine a meeting place bringing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together; to sing, heal and to honour the oldest living culture on earth. Through a number of events, Big Sing Community facilitates this unique and shared experience of singing and choral music for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

A Big Sing event provides a platform to come together; to connect to one another, to country and to the love of music where a common ground is established and healing is able to happen.

The first of the events, Big Sing in the Desert, was started in 2010 by choral music director Rachel Hore OAM. It has become the annual event for an experience like no other.

In the past decade, the Big Sing model has been embraced by diverse communities in different locations with events that harness the spirit of this beautiful country, its First Nations people and their ongoing connections to land, sea, language and culture.
SINGING TOGETHER

Big Sing in the Desert in Central Australia is a cross-cultural choral workshop bringing blackferrals and whitefullas together to sing and share. The spirit of this unique singing event contributes to reconciliation, cultural reinforcement and music development across the red centre and Australia wide. The event attracts around 120 singers each year from every state in Australia.

Through private donations and fee-paying non-Aboriginal participants, Big Sing sponsors the transport, accommodation, and workshop costs of 40 to 50 Aboriginal singers from Areyonga, Alice Springs, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Titjikala, Mutujulu and Docker River. Some women drive 700 kilometres to attend the three-day choral workshop.

In a musical exchange, Aboriginal singers share songs and mission hymns from their communities in their language and Rachel and co-tutor Morris Stuart teach the group new songs, some of which have been translated into Pitjantjatjarra, Western Arrarnta and Luritja. The musical exchanges and relationships that are created and reinforced each year make Big Sing in the Desert a unique and for some, life-changing experience.

“Rachel has helped us a lot. Helping us to sing strong way, learning about more harmonies. I was a leader... that was good. I might teach all the other girls if I’m a leader”.

Margaret Campbell, Titjikala Ladies choir, N.T. Oct. 2009

“The Big Sing in the Desert gives us white fellas the tiniest inkling into some of the unbroken traditions by the Aboriginal people with over 60,000 years of singing the country”. Big Sing Participant.

BLUEPRINT FOR CELEBRATION

“The visit to the desert allowed us as Elders to connect with the desert communities as well as Aboriginal people from other areas of Australia. It highlighted for us how much culture we have lost and how important it is to maintain and share what we have. We formed a whole lot of new friendships with these people. At least 12 Birpai women are now in regular contact with the Worimi community and participate in our Big Sing by the Sea.”

More information on Big Sing Community and events can be found at www.bigsingcommunity.com

The Big Sing in the Desert experience has also become a blueprint for other communities, with sister events being established across the country.

The Big Sing by the Sea, held in Forster NSW, since 2017, has its own story of successful cross-cultural relationships, engaging local Worimi and Birpai people in shared ongoing music and language development. A final concert allows participants to showcase songs to the local community and inspire interest in the revival of local language.

Singing on Deerubbin Shores in Richmond, NSW, has for the past three years brought Darug language songs to the Hawkesbury region. This choral workshop represents a unique opportunity to celebrate Darug language and culture on Darug country. Local Darug songwriters, Aunty Jacinta Tobin and Stacy-Jane Etal, have composed new songs, and translated songs into Darug language for this event.

During these workshops, local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants explore singing in harmony, inspired by local art and story, and together create new community music that honours culture – ancient and local.

PRESERVATION OF LANGUAGE, SONG AND CULTURE

Developing and maintaining strong and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal communities is the key ingredient for these events to happen and be successful. As the spirit of Big Sing Community continues to evolve and transform, we are witnessing the revitalisation and preservation of language, song and culture for the communities involved. Additionally, we are seeing an expansion in First Nations choral leadership and pride, and a new generation of choral singers. There is something truly magical when one is exposed to the power of singing, connecting wholeheartedly, and holding space for oneness.
As many readers would know, singers’ voices continue to change as they age. (Rojas et al, 2019) Narrowing (or shifting) vocal ranges, and losses of vibrato control, vocal agility or precision, are some of the changes I have observed. Other age-related factors – such as reduced stamina, mobility, vision or hearing – may impact repertoire selections and venue choices. In these “COVID times,” conductors must also make decisions to protect those most vulnerable. (World Health Organization, 2020)

What to do about ageing voices has been an ongoing challenge throughout my conducting career. It has affected all manner of artistic decisions and challenged some long-term relationships with individual choristers. Internal struggles relating to ageing voices may even influence a choir’s very existence.

I face such challenges today in my current role as music director of the Tudor Choristers. Founded in 1962 by (now 90-year-old) David Carolane OAM, the “Tudors” were a vibrant collection of highly skilled, youthful musicians - one of the first of its kind in Australia. (Campbell, 2003) The choir’s reputation quickly grew as it appeared in Musica Viva’s programming, on television, in film and toured internationally. I was a fan and attended many a concert in the 1980s.

Now on the precipice of its 60th anniversary, the 40-voice choir’s membership in 2021

Dr Kathleen McGuire is an award-winning music educator, conductor and composer who has worked extensively in Australia and overseas, including a decade at the helm of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus. She has led performances at some of the world’s finest venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Centre, Place des Arts (Montréal), Auckland Town Hall, Casino de Paris and the Sydney Opera House. In addition to directing the Tudor Choristers since 2017, Kathleen is an academic in the Faculty of Education and Arts at Australian Catholic University (Melbourne), while frequently appearing as a guest conductor and presenter at conferences and festivals. Her most recent compositions, published by Wirripang, include Missa de Spiritu Sancto, a Latin mass setting for choir and chamber orchestra, commissioned by Geelong Grammar School.
looks quite different and even includes some who have been with the Tudors through many of its six decades. Although the choir actively recruits and is building a base of younger singers, the majority of current members are at or nearing retirement age. The choristers are intelligent, musically capable and enthusiastic about learning and skill-building, but age invariably impacts their voices.

When COVID-19 reached Australian shores, to protect its members the Tudor Choristers anecdotally was one of the first choirs to cease meeting in person. By the end of February 2020, concerts were cancelled and we started meeting in Zoom. Once we overcame various technical hurdles, the next decision was: “What can we achieve this year?” Sans the crucial sharing of “tea and bickies,” choir members were only mildly interested in social gatherings in Zoom. Instead, we opted to focus on workshops and virtual choir videos and released a Christmas album compiled from concert recordings.

I had previously scheduled individual “vocal audits” for April 2020, which I was loath to postpone. It occurred to me that the choir members were already recording themselves for videos, so I asked if I could use the recordings also as their audits (in lieu of live, one-to-one audits). They agreed and to my delight, the outcomes exceeded expectation. I have now embarked on a research project, examining the Tudor Choristers’ achievements during 2020 (despite – even because of – COVID-19). Using a non-identifiable survey, I will analyse data collected from the singers’ responses. I expect the study will suggest methods for learning about the vocal needs of ageing voices and how conductors might offer manageable feedback to individuals.

Ultimately, conductors must choose: how do we balance a choir’s artistic (and fiscal) needs alongside what’s best for each singer or a choir’s “community”? Do we ignore the issues of ageing voices, offer individuals advice and assistance, or look for ways to remove ageing voices from our choirs?

The research project will offer choir members’ perspectives. Their ageing (or youthful) voices promise to give us new insights into age-old dilemmas.

REFERENCES


One of the few good things to have come out of 2020, WEBINARS are a COVID keeper, enabling ANCA to connect across States and Territories including its regional members. ANCA National is very proud to launch its 2021 Webinar Series.

OUR SERIES OF WEBINARS SPANS TOPICS SUCH AS

- Vocal Technique and Health
- Rehearsal Refreshers
- Grow your Choral Program
- Repertoire Corner
- Upskilling your choir
- Arts Administration Matters
- New Australian Works
- and more!

We have a great variety of Australian and International talent presenting these webinars, and in the first few months these include Darren Wicks, Michael Barrett-Berg, Stuart Davis, Carla Trott and Jerry Blackstone.

Here is the link for tickets to the live event: https://www.trybooking.com/BOKIH

ANCA is offering a replay of each event for a short time at https://www.trybooking.com/BOXMN

For more information please contact Kellie: events@anca.org.au
In SA we were blessed with a relatively quick return to singing in the second half of last year and it has been wonderful to see many of our member choirs putting on performances and creating videos to share with the community. In September ANCA SA held “Southern Stars” to allow both school and community choirs to experience a performance opportunity after a long year of little singing. The first round involved choirs sending in a video to be adjudicated, and in October we welcomed seven choirs to perform live for an audience in the Hopgood Theatre. We were delighted to have 45 groups take part in the overall event.

This year we are planning a raft of events in the lead up to hosting Choralfest in April 2022. These will include performances including in one of Adelaide’s premier choral venues, Elder Hall, workshops for both conductors and singers, as well as giving members the opportunity to attend “open rehearsals” with a variety of local choirs to get an insight into rehearsal practices of their peers. With the unfortunate cancellation of Generations in Jazz, we look forward to partnering with the Association of Heads of Music in Non-Government Schools (AHOMINGS) to present Vocal Jazz Fest 2021 on April 29/20 and May 2, a competition for South Australian school jazz choirs and vocal ensembles.

We have recently welcomed Georgie Simmons (pictured, right) to our committee. She has an impressive background in education, conducting and singing, and has recently returned from further study in Canada. We are very excited to have her input and expertise on the SA Committee.

*Victoria Coxhill, SA President*
During mid March we discovered that the Innisfail Choral Society was closing down and were about to take their choral library to the dump. Just prior to the lockdown, I sped down the Palmerston Range to inspect their library. I told the Secretary I would take the lot. I thought how important this organization has been, nurturing people like John Curro (Qld Youth Symphony Orchestra), John Kotzas (CEO Qld Performing Arts Complex), Shaun Brown and Mark Donnelly (operatic baritones), to name just a few.

The Innisfail Choral Society had some exceptional conductor/pianists over the years so the repertoire is wide ranging and includes musicals. Concerts and musicals were used to fundraise for the organization to buy more repertoire and to pay licence fees for musical performances, sets, costumes, show lighting, electricity etc. They were also paying to rent property owned by the Innisfail Shire Council for rehearsal and performance.

When lockdown happened, my finances would not support a removalist getting the two cupboards full to bursting to my house in Atherton. But the secretary and her husband are old hands at backstage work, so up the range they came with trailer and one cupboard, and a little hatchback full to bursting. The next week the same minus the cupboard.

The musical legacy of the Innisfail Choral Society was now mine. Sitting in my lounge, and in my office. Oh joy! Surrounded by so much history, I feel the legacy of this far north Queensland organization should go to the State Library as an historical record and maybe a valuable resource for all choral directors in Qld. But I have seen music librarians chuck out damaged stock, so I feel the need to ponder how to utilize this wonderful resource. There is a meticulous inventory of the repertoire in alphabetical order which I intend to expand on adding number of copies, voice type, type of accompaniment, publisher, and copyright date.

The WA chapter of ANCA is delighted that Dr Robert Braham, (Pictured, right) one of WA’s most celebrated choral specialists has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal this year. As Director of Music at Trinity College, Perth, Robert conducts the senior school choirs who have sung in festivals in London, Dublin, Belfast, New York, Beijing, Llangollen, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Sydney and Perth. For the past decade, the Trinity College Senior Chorale has also worked closely with Mercedes College and previously with the PLC Chorale for 20 years. Robert works as an adjudicator and tutors at the annual Melbourne ACCET summer school.

For fourteen years Robert was the Musical Director of the Perth Oratorio Choir. He has also prepared Ravel’s *Daphnis and Chloe* and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* for the WASO Chorus. In 2004 he conducted three of Perth’s major choirs: POC, UWACS and PUCS with the University of Western Australia Orchestra in a highly acclaimed performance of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*. Robert was the founding conductor of the WA Youth Chorale. As part of the Western Australian Youth Orchestra organization, the Chorale became a quality choir for school leavers. In 2006 the WAYC won the state final of the ABC FM Sing Out competition adult section and represented WA in the national final.

Robert is keen to perform and promote Australian compositions and has premiered many such works, most recently Cara Fesjian’s *Ode to Ode* for the Perth Festival. As the Artistic director of Voyces, he has developed a choir that extensively performs modern choral compositions. Now in their tenth year, Voyces has toured to the Festival of Voices in Tasmania and performed in Choralfests in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Robert has also worked with the Vancouver Chamber Choir in their annual conductors’ symposium and most recently with the Gesualdo Six at the 2020 Perth Festival.

Carol McGoldrick, founder and director of Tableland Schola, writes from rural and remote far north Queensland.
World Choir Games

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- Tour Time are financially bonded and licensed (for protection of your funds)
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