



## THE MELBOURNAIRES HARMONY CHORUS

# Blended Notes

- a newsletter for our friends  
August 2009

### The mailing list

We recently began a mailing list for friends of our chorus – people who would like to be kept up-to-date with our activities. This is the first edition of a newsletter which we hope will fill that need. Future editions will be published every few months.

You can be sure that our list of email addresses is held securely and will not be given to other organisations. If, at any time, you decide that you don't want to receive further newsletters simply go to our website, [www.melbournaires.com](http://www.melbournaires.com), select the Current Events tab and then Mailing List, enter your email address in the box and hit the **Unsubscribe** button.

Of course, if you know of others who would be interested in knowing more about The Melbournaires, they can add their names to our mailing list by going to the Mailing List page on our website, typing in their email address and hitting the **Subscribe** button.

### The barbershop style

The Melbournaires are a male chorus singing the popular music of past years in four-part harmony. We sing in the “**barbershop style**” with the melody being carried by the second tenors whom we call “leads”. Our first tenors supply a light harmony line above the leads usually in a falsetto voice. The basses supply the foundation notes for most chords and our baritones supply a fourth harmony note.

We aim to sing our four notes in each chord so accurately that the blend creates overtones which can be heard as fifth, and perhaps even sixth notes which add to the harmony sound. In fact, because the human voice is more flexible than the notes of a piano, we strive to tune chords better than a piano can. Impossible? Not really, but it takes a little know-how.

### A little history

The barbershop style developed in America in the late 1800s and was heavily influenced by the harmonies preferred by black Americans. In the days when re-

corded music was of poor quality, public radio was non-existent, and the music was heard live, songs were played from sheet music around the “piano in the parlour” and sung around the streets or in places where people met.

The barbershop was one of those places that was often like a local club. Men gathered there not only for a shave and a haircut but also to socialise. The back room might also serve as a change room for the local baseball team. What better place to ask your friends “Have you heard this song?” and for your friends to try to harmonise your melody just like the instruments in a band.

It wasn't long before many barbershops had their own quartets. John Mills, father of the Mills Brothers, was a barber himself and sang in a quartet. No wonder his boys developed a love of harmony that took them to the stages of theatres around the world.



Norman Rockwell's “Barbershop Quartet”

But with the growth of public radio in the twenties and thirties and the improvement in the quality and availability of recordings, the barbershop quartet was being relegated to the history books.

Until 1938... when O.C. Cash and Rupert Hall who, recalling their younger days when men used to gather to sing in harmony, advertised a meeting on the top (fifth) floor of a hotel in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for men who could harmonise, and such was the response that the singing from the inaugural meeting on the top floor caused traffic to stop in the street outside. The success of this meeting led them to form the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBSQSA) which has grown to become simply the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) with about 30000 members in America and thousands more in affiliated associations throughout the world. The Australian Association of Men Barbershop Singers (AAMBS) has about 800 members.

Of course, when the ladies saw how much fun their menfolk were having, they soon created their own barbershop organisation, Sweet Adelines International.

Initially, SAI, being founded in the southern states, was for white ladies only and this led to the establishment of a rival ladies barbershop organisation, Harmony Incorporated, in the northern states. These days racial differences have no bearing on membership. The common bond is a love of harmony singing.

### What about Australia?

The Sweet Adelines had spread to Australia by the eighties, and soon the men were becoming envious of the fun the ladies were having and started their own barbershop clubs. In Melbourne, some of the ladies

from the Melbourne Chorus of Sweet Adelines helped start our own chorus in 1991 and the Geelong ladies helped establish the Geelong Bay City Conchords for their men.

Each barbershop club forms its own chorus to sing in the barbershop style and each chorus provides the opportunity for quartets to form. Our quartets are

- the Six Foot Four,
- The Chordsmen,
- Down South,
- Pitchblend,
- Boardwalk and
- Soundstream.

Check them out on the Quartets page of our website. Some of our younger members are currently in the process of forming a new quartet that promises to have a very good blend.



The Six Foot Four: Lecky Webster (tenor), Ian Lushey (lead), Steve Carnie (bass) and Doug Moody (baritone)



The inaugural meeting of The Melbournaires on 9th May, 1991 included a Gisborne quartet "Short Back and sides", and Marion Reinsch from the Melbourne Chorus.

Such humble beginnings...



The Chordsmen: Back row: John Webb (tenor), Mal Tighe (bass), Doug Moody (baritone/lead), Alan Bishop (lead./baritone)



### Down South:

Frank Blackham (baritone), Peter Whitmore (lead),  
David Durrant (bass), Robert Whitmore (tenor)

### More Melbournaires?

The larger the chorus, the greater the collection of musical talent. Membership of The Melbournaires is now close to 60 men but we would love to see that number rise to 100 or more.

We welcome men of all ages to come along any Monday night to our rehearsal venue at the

**Doncaster East Uniting Church,  
152 Andersons Creek Road,  
Doncaster East,**

to see the chorus in action and give barbershop a go. We look for men who can hold their note when others around them are singing different parts and who can blend their voices with the rest of the group. The ability to read music is not a requirement but is a useful skill.

And you don't have to be able to sing a harmony line. If you have a tenor-type voice then you may well be a much-needed melody singer. No previous choral singing experience is required. If you love to sing and others think you sound OK then we may have a place for you in the Melbournaires, but you'll never know unless you come along one Monday night.

### Sing in Harmony 2010

Have you heard about the FREE course we run over six nights to introduce men to the tricks of harmony singing. We run this course in alternate years and our last course in 2008 received rave reviews from the participants. There's no obligation to join our chorus at the completion of the course and many men come along from other groups to improve their skills. Next year's course will commence on April 12 at 7:30pm. This is an easy way to find out if you enjoy harmony singing.

## Where have we been singing?

The Chorus has performed for many different groups in the past months. Whilst many of these gigs have been for private functions, some have been available to the public. Our quartets have filled many additional appointments throughout Melbourne at parties, fairs and business functions. The following list of past gigs will give you an idea of the kinds of functions where some barbershop entertainment works well. Those that were available to the public are marked with a P.

6/11	8am	Fosters Group—Movember Campaign
7/11	7pm	Templestowe Retirement Village
22/11	(P)	Doncaster Church of Christ Concert
26/11	8:30pm	Preston Garden Club Xmas Party
10/12	(P) 12 noon	Anglicare, 101 Collins St
13/12	8pm	Greythorn Bowling Club Xmas Party
19/12	(P) 9pm	Manningham Council Carols
26/1	(P) 11am	Australia Day Event, Alexandra Gardens
16/2	2pm	North Balwyn Senior Citizens
15/3	(P)	Heathmont Uniting Church Sunday Music
27/3	7:30pm	Manningham Council Bushfire Appeal
17/4	9pm	Belgrave Ex-Servicemen's Masonic Lodge
2/5	(P)	Xavier College Choir Festival
23/5	(P)	East Doncaster Baptist Church Concert
29/5	(P)	Surrey Music Café Jazz night
5/6	7pm	Donvale Retirement Village
23/6	7:30pm	Whealers Hill LIONS Club
13/7	6pm	Kew Masonic Lodge
23/8	4:45pm	Box Hill Salvation Army "Sing and Serve" at their dinner for the poor

### Future Gig Guide

Here's what we currently have in the diary:

9/9	1pm	Templestowe Probus
12/10	(P)	Seniors Night at our rehearsal venue
9/12	8:30pm	Glen Iris Garden Club Xmas Party
15/12	(P) 1pm	Box Hill Centro Live Music
17/12	(P) 1pm	Box Hill Centro Live Music
21/12	(P) 1pm	Box Hill Centro Live Music

## Last Saturday in September

Yes, that's the day when barbershop choruses from around Australia compete for the AAMBS Chorus trophy. From September 24-27 barbershoppers from around Australia will gather in Hobart for the 10th biennial Australian Convention. On Thursday 24th September we have the youth and schools chorus and quartet competitions. The Welcome Dinner is in the evening. On Friday 25th, 36 quartets will compete for the Open and Seniors trophies. Saturday is the Chorus competition and Saturday night is the Showcase Concert. This features the winners from the various sections of the convention PLUS a performance by the

quartet State Line Grocery, one of the best quartets in the world. On Sunday there is an ecumenical church service and Farewell lunch.

Fifty-two Melbournaires will be heading to Hobart for the Convention. Seven will stay on for an additional three days to attend a live-in Harmony College conducted by the judges and the visiting quartet.

The Convention encourages each Chorus to work to achieve the highest standards. We will be singing the ballad *"All the Way"* and the up-tempo toe-tapper *"Taking a Chance on Love"*. We have had visiting experts to coach us in singing and movement.

*Six Foot Four* will represent us in the Open quartet competition and *The Chordsmen* and *Boardwalk* will compete in the Seniors competition. Eight boys, mostly from Melbourne High, will represent Victoria in the Youth/Schools competition.

## Seniors Week

As part of Seniors Week, the Melbournaires will be inviting Victorian Seniors to join us at our rehearsal on **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30 pm, at East Doncaster Uniting Church**. You'll be able to ask questions and clear up any queries you may have about what it is to be a member of The Melbournaires. You might even like to join us on the risers for a song or a tag. It's a great retirement hobby. At the end of the night tea/coffee and a biscuit will be available for a gold coin donation.

## Sons of Sunbury

Adam Prezlocki has been running a ladies chorus in Sunbury called the Sunbury Divas. They are very good and appeared on the Battle of the Choirs. But last year, responding to demand from the local men, he began a

choir called the Sons of Sunbury.

They discovered some barbershop music on the internet and began singing some of their repertoire in the barbershop style. This year they formed their own barbershop quartet—Sound Harmony. We discovered the existence of this second barbershop chorus in Melbourne when their quartet decided to enter into the quartet competition at the Hobart Convention and competed in the qualifying round in May.

So naturally we invited them over to East Doncaster for a singing social evening. They are a great group of men and their chorus is about 30 strong. Their intention is to compete in the 2011 AAMBS Convention in Brisbane and the Melbournaires can look forward to strong competition.

## The Barbershop Show

At 10:05 a.m. on the first Wednesday in every month you can hear Roger Archman play recordings of the world's best barbershop choruses and quartets on Eastern FM 98.1. If you love harmony singing, it's a show that shouldn't be missed.

## Enquiries

- ♫ Contact [ask@melbournaires.com](mailto:ask@melbournaires.com) if you have any queries. Your email will be directed to the appropriate person (or quartet) for reply
- ♫ Phone our President, Peter Canet, on 9815 0961.
- ♫ Visit [www.melbournaires.com/](http://www.melbournaires.com/).

**Our CD, "On Fire", can be purchased at performances or at our rehearsals.**



This strange collection of hairy upper lips gathered at the Fosters Group headquarters at Southbank last November to encourage their staff participation in the men's health "Movember" campaign. For the occasion we prepared a parody of "Yesterday".

*Yesterday, all my prostate gland was cut away  
Now my bladder's in some disarray  
But I'm improving every day.  
Suddenly, I am twice the man I used to be  
Since I had a prostatectomy  
The operation's on TV.  
It just had to go, now I know it couldn't stay.  
It had nasty cells. Now they're gone and I'm OK  
Yesterday, love was such an easy game to play  
Thoughts of love are now put far away  
Oh how I dream of yesterday  
Now Movember's here and it's time for us to say  
"Have your prostate check. Don't be shy and don't delay.  
Right away, see the doctor for a PSA  
You will find out if your health's OK  
Now off to work, have a happy day." Ooh.....*