

# Our Chorus

Inception - Saturday February 9, 9:30am - 5pm, followed by optional dinner

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*A democratic, fully collaborative harmony chorus*

## Can it Work?

Surely it's not possible for a harmony chorus to be run along democratic lines, with every member having an equal voice? Surely you have to have a director who picks the music and tells you how to sing it? It's not possible! It's *not* possible, *unless...*

- We share a common vision and common values
- We trust each other and treat each other with respect
- We are willing to give and receive feedback graciously to improve our performances
- We fulfil our commitments to each other and to our audiences
- We have a framework in place for structuring our rehearsals and our management
- We have supporting tools that will help us communicate and get things done

Our inception on Saturday February 9 will explain how all this can come together to create something amazing.

## Who is the Founder?



Hi, I'm Mary-Anne Cosgrove. I have been a member of Sweet Adelines choruses Endeavour Harmony and Brindabella Chorus, since 2004. I have sung with several quartets and am currently the Quartet Coordinator for Sweet Adelines Australia.

I've also been a member of other vocal groups including Sydney Vocal Project and Sophisticated Swing.

Last year I joined an awesome consulting company called ThoughtWorks that has taught me a great deal about collaborative teamwork principles, practices and tools that I'm excited to share with the singing community.

## **I'm Interested!**

### **Inception February 9**

Our Chorus will have a full day inception workshop, including auditions, on Saturday February 9. You are invited to join us! The location will be somewhere in Sydney - the venue to be determined closer to the date. The Inception will be followed by an optional dinner - partners welcome. Please RSVP by completing the survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/G3VH5GH> by January 31.

### **Registrations**

Our website is now open for registrations at [www.our-chorus.org](http://www.our-chorus.org). You may also register for membership on the day. Feel free to register even if you can't make the Inception. We will hold a similar workshop later in the year for induction of new members.

### **Just Curious?**

If you are interested in finding out more about Our Chorus, but do not intend to register for membership, you may still come to the inception workshop. You will not be allowed to vote, however, until you register.

### **Don't want to leave your current chorus?**

If you belong to another chorus and want to stay with them, don't worry! Like belonging to a quartet, Our Chorus is intended to work well as an adjunct to chorus life. This is the perfect outlet for those who would enjoy the creativity of belonging to a quartet but have not been able to join one.

### **Out of Town?**

Our Chorus will be catering for remote members. You may join our Inception via Trello and Google Hangout. Contact us at [ourchorus.info@gmail.com](mailto:ourchorus.info@gmail.com) for further information.

### **Be Prepared!**

Please bring a plate of food to share for lunch and a tablet or laptop if you have one. You may like to sign up for a Google account at <https://accounts.google.com/SignUp> and use your Google account to sign up for Trello at <https://trello.com/>. These services are free and will be an essential part of the collaboration of Our Chorus.

Be prepared to sing any song of your choosing if you are auditioning.

### **Cost**

\$20 goes towards purchase of one song for the chorus, venue hire and inception materials. Dinner is at your own cost, if you choose to attend.

## Draft Inception Program

### Getting to Know You

We will start getting to know each other by sharing our musical goals and personal stories.

### Embrace Change

I will explain how embracing change has revolutionised the software industry, and how we can harness change to make Our Chorus a dynamic and exciting place to be, where everyone feels ownership of what we do and how we do it.

### Our Tools

I will tell you a little about the technology that can make all this work, and how to use it:

- Our Website
- Trello
- Google Docs
- Google Hangouts
- Dropbox
- Voting

### Become an Action Hero

Traditional choruses have roles, such as Treasurer, Performance Manager, Director, etc. Our Chorus has only Actions. We trust our members to become Action Heroes, pro-actively taking responsibility for actions they know how to complete. Action progress is tracked in Trello.

### Our Vision and Our Values

#### A Vision:

*“We love bringing pleasure to our audiences  
by singing harmonies that raise goose-bumps,  
make the heart race, or bring tears to the eyes.”*

#### Some Values:

- We all have an equal say in what we sing, how we sing it, and how we operate
- We trust each other, and treat each other with respect
- We sing every song with passion and enthusiasm
- We work hard to produce high quality music
- We fulfil our commitments to each other and to our audiences
- We give and receive feedback graciously to improve our performances
- We are sensitive to each other's feelings

We will work together on these, adding, modifying, rejecting, accepting or flagging them for future discussion, to make them *Our Vision* and *Our Values*.

### **Become a Feedback Farmer or nurturing Mother Nature**

Giving and receiving feedback to each other is an essential part of singing without a director and improving our performance. Learning a new singing technique is like planting a seed. It can only grow to its full potential if we care for it by practicing, listening to ourselves, and being receptive to feedback from others.

It also requires nurturing from Mother Nature - rich soil, gentle rain and warm sunshine. Providing feedback to others is like being Mother Nature. It can be nurturing or it can be destructive as a hailstorm. We trust our members to proactively seek feedback and provide it to others gently.

### **Our Rehearsals**

Our rehearsals are structured and managed by a facilitator, who keeps things moving along. Rehearsals may be attended remotely, and songs are recorded and stored in Trello. We trust our members to practice against the recordings in Trello if they choose not to attend rehearsals.

### **The Management Supper**

Management decisions can be made either online or via Management Suppers. Any member may request a Management Supper to be held, and any member may attend in person or remotely. They are run using the Lean Coffee technique. Decisions and Actions are recorded in Trello.

### **The Music Charrette**

A Charrette is a collaborative technique for coming up with designs, allowing all participants to contribute to the creative process. We will use Music Charrettes to select songs and develop the interpretation for them. Any member may attend a Music Charrette. The interpretation will be annotated onto sheet music PDFs and made available to members in Trello.

### **Retrospectives**

How do we know if all these things will work? We won't know what suits us until we try it. So we embrace change, and ask ourselves "What did we do well?", "What can we do better?" and "What are we confused about?", in a retrospective held after every performance or on demand. Retrospectives help ensure our systems are working well for us.

### **The Audition Supper**

Our Auditions are open auditions. They begin with a "get to know you" session with drinks and snacks. Prospective Members may select any song they like and sing it to the gathering. Members vote on whether a Prospective Member may join straight away, or may re-audition later. Feedback is given to all Prospective Members. Prospective Members who are accepted into the group become Probationary Members.

### **Our Name**

We will select a name for Our Chorus.

### **Wrap Up**

We will set dates for the first Rehearsal and the first Music Charrette, say farewell to those who are not coming to the dinner, then head out for the meal.