

SING: HELLO MARY LOU

Alex: Hello! My name is Alex and we're the Mellow Diners, a barbershop quartet from Melbourne. If you are wondering what that name actually means; don't worry as you wouldn't be the first. We soon realized after we registered this name that it is potentially a little too much of an in-joke within the barbershop and a capella community. Melodyne is an audio editing software that is running rampant through the vocal world that provides an option to auto tune. The name is a play on words as we personally think that Melodyne can be a very dangerous tool!

Who has heard of barbershop? Who has ever seen a barbershop quartet or chorus perform? Who here remembers the B Sharps on the Simpsons singing Baby on Board? Have any of you seen Jimmy Fallon and Justin Timberlake singing with the Rag Time Gals on Saturday Night Live? Has anyone seen the musical The Music Man?

Barbershop harmony has been around for close to a century with the international organization based in the USA, the Barbershop Harmony Society, celebrating its 75th birthday last year. Barbershop has managed to make its way into a wide variety of musical spheres and right across the world with over 25,000 members. Barbershop has a presence in Australia for over 25 years. Each of us sings a different part. I sing the highest part, tenor, Lindsay sings the lead part, Andrew sings the bass part and Luke sings whatever part he chooses...well, the baritone part. Barbershop is a little different to other choral art forms. The characteristics that make it "barbershop" are consonant 4-part harmony with a predominance of major, minor and seventh chords exploiting the circle of fifths progression through the use of secondary dominant harmony, melody predominantly in the second voice, singable and recognizable melodies, the lock and ringing of chords that occurs when there is a match of tone, resonance, dynamic, vowel and tuning, and the use of embellishments to colour the arrangements of our songs and provide interest.

I sing the tenor part, which is generally the highest of the four parts. Traditionally, choral music is written with the melody in the top voice, however, in barbershop music the melody is generally sung by the lead who sings just below the tenor.

Lindsay: My name is Lindsay and I sing the lead part. The lead sings the melody the majority of the time and acts as the storyteller...the front man...the ladies man...

Andrew: My name is Andrew and I sing the bass part. The bass is the most important voice in the quartet. As you may be aware, when we speak or sing, the pitch we create is not just one pitch but contains a spectrum of pitches. The bass acts as the support for the upper 3 parts who, from a harmonic standpoint, are reinforcing the spectrum of pitches created by the bass voice.

Alex: So really, we just feel like Andrew's back up singers...

Luke: And my name is Luke and I sing the baritone part. The baritone part is comprised of all the notes that the other three parts don't want to sing, which often makes the baritone part the hardest to sing. The baritone part requires the talents of a vocal ninja or anyone up for a bit of a challenge.

Alex: We would love to get all of you singing today but before we do, we want to make sure we are warmed up and ready to sing. Remember that a warm up isn't just about warming up the voice but a chance to tune your instrument and develop ensemble skills. I'll hand over to Luke to get your bodies warmed up.

Luke: Singing requires the whole body to be awake and warm as singing is a full body exercise as the sounds we make when we sing aren't simply being created by our mouths and throat.

STRETCHING/JUMPING/SHAKING

When we sing, the sound needs to be supported with air from down below.

Alex: Breathing to sing is quite different to everyday breathing. It requires the use of muscles that we generally do not engage in day-to-day activities and conversation. Does anyone know what important muscle we use while breathing? The role of the diaphragm is to move all of the junk (motion to diaphragm) out of the way. And by junk, I mean all those unimportant vital organs that keep us alive...

SHH FFF SSS BREATHING EXERCISE

Andrew: **SIRENING EXERCISE (ON "NG" + LIP BUZZ + "NAIR")**

Lindsay: One of the great things about barbershop is that there is a global community of singers who are all mad keen on singing four-part harmony. Barbershop also encourages singers to use their ears to learn and to tune accurately. Barbershoppers LOVE teaching, learning and singing tags. Does anyone know what a tag is? Does anyone know what coda means? Has anyone ever heard the term outro. Tags are generally the final few bars of an arrangement and more often than not contain all the best bits of the song. We would love to teach you a tag right now. Let's have everyone standing up and arrange yourselves lowest voices on the left through highest voices on the right. We will sing this tag for you and then teach you the parts. The lyrics are "sunshine is bidding the day goodbye".

SING: **SUNSHINE IS BIDDING THE DAY GOODBYE**

Andrew: (sing bass part once + point out that they hold the last note for a long time, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary – if possible add learnings from the warm up taught)

Luke: (sing baritone part once + point out that it's only 2 notes, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have the bottom 2 parts sing together – if possible add learnings from the warm up taught)

Lindsay: (sing lead part once + point out that they have to wait for the baritone to move, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have the bottom 3 parts sing together)

Alex: (sing tenor part once + point out that it is all stepwise motion by a semitone, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have all parts sing together at least once – if possible add learnings from the warm up taught)

Alex: This time, I would like everyone to *listen louder than they sing*.

SING: **SUNSHINE IS BIDDING THE DAY GOODBYE**

Alex: Fantastic work – give yourself a round of applause! We have brought with us music for a song that we love for you to sing. Please take a copy of the sheet music. This is a barbershop standard (otherwise known as a Polecat) similar to the tune that we sang at the beginning of this session. It is a medley (or a mash up) of 2 songs: Honey and Little ‘Lize. Today we will be learning the second half of this medley from bar 9. We will sing through the song once and while we do follow along with the same part that you just sang and try to pitch the notes in your head.

SING: **HONEY/LITTLE ‘LIZE MEDLEY**

Lindsay: (sing lead part once, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary)

Andrew: (sing bass part once, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have the leads join)

Alex: (sing tenor part once + point out the pattern that follows the leads, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have the leads and basses join)

Luke: (sing baritone part once + point out that there are only 3 notes but they are very important notes, have the students join for the second time and sing it one final time with them if necessary then have all other parts join)

SING: **HONEY/LITTLE ‘LIZE MEDLEY**

Alex: Congratulations – you have just learned a whole song! You are free to keep your copy of this music as it is in the public domain. We encourage you to keep singing this song!

Andrew: All of us became involved with barbershop when we were in high school and we are here to tell you that there is no reason that you can’t either. There is a great new group called Tag Team that is forming in Hobart for guys aged between 15 and 30. Please take one of these flyers home and consider visiting their rehearsal on Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 at the Hobart City Church of Christ. We will also leave a copy of this poster with your teacher. Girls, never fear for there are groups available for you also. We encourage all of you to jump online and discover the many resources there are available by doing a google search for barbershop and barbershop in Hobart.

Lindsay: There is a HUGE amount of incredibly cool barbershop singing to be found on YouTube so get searching and get listening!

Luke: Before we finish, are there any questions that anyone would like to ask?

Alex: We would like to play you a quick video of a chorus from Westminster, CA called the Westminster Chorus. This is a chorus of guys aged between 18 and 35 who make a pretty extraordinary sound. They are just everyday blokes, very few of them professional musicians, who just love singing. This is a recording from 2010 when they won the International Barbershop contest. Enjoy!

PLAY: **WESTMINSTER – MARDI GRAS PARADE**

A FEW THINGS TO NOTE

- The first song should be short, fast and entertaining
- The tag should be tailored to the voice ranges available by (ie: predominance of male or female) but will likely need to be voiced for mixed voices
- If it is a small, weak or restless group then teach them the tag and gauge their ability as it may be better to spend some time perfecting the tag rather than teaching the song – a second tag might be a good option
- If there are a lot of girls in the class, also play them **GQ's Something Good Medley**
- If there is no playback available, sing them another song (preferably someone with a big tag)