

Open up your world with a cappella



Twenty five years ago, when the Disney song "A Whole New World" from the film *Aladdin* won the Academy Award for Best Original Song, Coastal a Cappella was entering its own whole new world as a four part harmony chorus. Today, under the director Linda Wareham, Coastal a Cappella is still going strong, with 45 singers of all ages.

‘Do you sing in the shower? Belt out tunes at karaoke?’ laughs Shelley Robertson. ‘Well, that was me! Celine Dion, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears and Shania Twain were my idols. But when I heard the chorus sing for the first time, it was *What a Wonderful World*. It brought tears to my eyes and made something stir inside. I wanted to sing with the chorus and give people just as much joy as I had experienced.’ Now a mother of three, Shelley juggles her tasks to find time to pursue her passion, including being Assistant Lead Section Leader and a quartet member. ‘At the start, I went a little crazy trying to learn everything. I was working on five songs at a time. I have such a passion for singing now that I wished I hadn’t wasted so much time before I found it.’

Anna Walker, another enthusiastic singer, says, ‘Listening to music and singing makes me happy, it creates feelings of joy and fulfilment for me!’ Anna had crossed the world from Sweden to Australia with a marketing degree under her belt, and fallen in love with a local fella, Sam. They married, had two children and, with another on the way, Anna remembered the joy singing gave her. She joined the chorus, and immediately felt a sense of belonging. In Sweden, music is an integral part of the general education, and in the summers, she and her friends attended camps. ‘We’d have a mini Woodstock where we’d get dressed up and learn to love the Doors, Led Zeppelin and such music at a young age. Pretty cool looking back at it,’ she laughs now. Part of the choreography team and a quartet member, Anna encourages women to join Coastal a Cappella. ‘It’s an amazing thing to be a part of a worldwide network of strong females who have all fallen in love with this art form.’

Being plucked out of the audience as a five year old by the famous singer Demis Roussos at a London concert is a never-forgotten thrill for Tash Whitwell, and opened up the world of music to her.



Above: From left Tash Whitwell, Anna Walker, Shelley Robertson, Michelle Clarke

‘He sat me on his ample belly, and sang *Forever and Ever* to me, I was so moved I fell totally in love!’ A busy mother of two, with degrees in Biological Science and Immunological Parasitology, and director of two companies, Tash was drawn to Coastal a Cappella because of the focus on performance, education and competition. She loves being on stage. ‘I still remember the high of our first medal for third place as a small chorus, and also the adrenaline rush of my first quartet comp. There are so many positive human interactions, which also teach you a lot about yourself. It is a commitment, but it is some time for me, not as wife, Mum or boss! Plus it gives me an opportunity to learn which I don’t get from my work, and I *love* to learn and study.’

For both Tash and Michelle Clarke, their love of singing came from their mothers - Michelle’s mum had many lead roles in musicals in Tweed Heads. Michelle sang in choirs, played the piano and even won a scholarship for singing lessons with an opera singer. ‘A turning point for me was conducting the church youth choir in Pymble where I really learned to listen and interpret music,’ she says. Later, married and with young children, Michelle discovered the chorus and quartetting. ‘I came along one night and never left! I learned so much in my first year about voice production and how to sing, not just to sing the notes. It was a step into a whole new world and what I was looking for all along.’

Coastal a Cappella is running a “learn to sing” four-part a cappella course for women of all ages, starting with an August 26 Saturday Workshop, with follow-up tuition for the subsequent four Tuesday nights. Please see contact information below, bookings are essential.

Workshop: Saturday August 26, 8.30-3.30pm

**Cost \$60 includes workshop day, four weeks follow-up program, all materials and tuition
At Erina Leagues Club, Ilya Avenue, Erina**

4 Week Program

**Erina Baptist Church, 349 The Entrance Rd, Erina
Tuesday 7.30pm**

Registration Form at email: coastalacappella@gmail.com

Phone for more information: Peita: 0412 948 450

www.coastalacappella.com