

Choir members in Glee-influenced Sing City don't stop believin'

Seasoned singing group not opposed to jazz hands and hookups

BY CHERYL ROSSI, VANCOUVER COURIER SEPTEMBER 10, 2010



In addition to singing hit songs from the 1960s, '70s and '80s, members of the Sing City Show Choir performed choreographed moves such as jazz hands.

Photograph by: submitted, for Vancouver Courier

They may be sprouting grey hair and their romances may be slower to bloom, but Vancouver's Sing City Show Choir could still be considered the local, adult version of *Glee*, according to its members and vocal coach.

"In this choir you feel like you cannot let the rest of the team down," said Paul Crouser, 58, who joined his wife, Lynda, in the Sing City Show Choir last year. "You have to do your homework, you have to learn your part. I've seen episodes [of the TV show *Glee*] where that's been a source of tension... The choir fills a bit of a social void and provides a healthy place to come and meet people that are actually doing something, not just sitting at a bar."

Crouser won't be surprised if some of the choir members hook up.

"A couple of the basses are on the prowl," he said.

But the self-described "spastic" dancer was surprised with how well the amateur choir's singing and choreography, including jazz hands, came together at its concerts last season.

"It's like patting my head and rubbing my belly at the same time," he said. "But we did it--we did it. I've watched the videos and we pulled it off."

A video montage of the choir's sold-out June performance at St. Paul's Anglican Church on Jarvis Street, where members rehearse for two-and-half hours each week and also perform, shows them swaying in relative synchronicity to songs including "Gimme Some Lovin'" by Spencer Davis Group, a smaller section of the choir chugging their arms to "Choo Choo Ch' Boogie" by Manhattan Transfer and throwing their hands into the air for "Hallelujah I Just Love Her So" by Ray Charles.

Crouser joined Sing City after his wife received an email begging for basses from a professional singer she admires and who conducts the choir, Laura Lang.

Now these men are the most cohesive section of the choir, meeting over the summer and mixing their twice-monthly bass section rehearsals with cheese and scotch.

Lang's always searching for more men to join the choir but, for once, she's seeking more men who sing tenor.

Lang, who first sang on the radio when she was six with her mother who was a professional singer, travelled the world for 15 years as a professional singer and performed as part of the local cabaret jazz trio A String of Girls, started the Sing City choir in 2007. She saw a lack of Vancouver choirs harmonizing on the revamped 1960s, '70s and '80s tunes she favours.

The choir started with 31 women and four men and has 65 people registered so far this year. The first rehearsal of the season starts Sept. 14. About one-third of the registrants are men.

Lang auditions wannabe performers on the phone to ensure they can sing in tune.

"Everything else I can teach them," she said.

"Everybody is capable of much more than they think they are and they end up feeling so proud of themselves because they're doing things at a much, much higher level than they ever thought they were capable of," Lang said. "They're so thrilled when they're performing... They're like, 'Oh my God, I'm doing this, I'm doing this.'"

She selects more advanced members of the choir and arranges the music for a smaller group called Fat Chants.

Lang says Glee has inspired more people, especially those in their 20s, to give performing with her choir a try.

"We're doing 'Don't Stop Believin' [Glee's] version, this season," she said. "So many people who have enquired about Sing City have said, 'I love the fact that you're doing Don't Stop from Glee.'"

The choir performs each season in December and June. The next show is Dec. 5.

For more information, email singcity@live.ca.

