



Too High?

Julie Thomas
Director of Imperial Choir



Another busy and successful year for our ladies. Following the annual Festa, during which we sang in the concert with the Imperial Band on the 2nd of September and the hymn to Our Lady of Victories with our band on the 7th and the 8th, we had a fairly quiet October. This was followed by a busy November with a Remembrance service in church, a band and choir concert to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Mellieħa Local Council at Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieħa, and our usual mass at the lovely Monastery of St Catherine's in Valletta. December brought its usual bout of carol singing concerts. We had an in-house Christmas concert with the band, our own very successful concert in the restaurant at The Paradise Bay Hotel, and a cosy concert at the Solana next to the sweet-smelling gingerbread fireplace that had been built in the reception area. On Boxing Day, we sang carols with the band at Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieħa helping the residents to join in the carol singing.

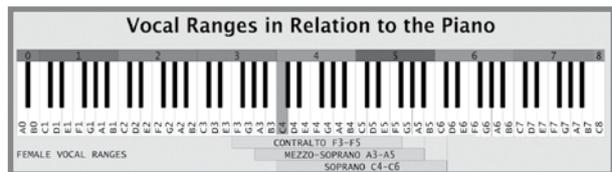
2019 saw us singing a lovely celebratory mass for Sister Antoinette, again at the Monastery of St Catherine's, Valletta, on the 12th of January. However, it was now time to start learning fresh repertoire for the new year. On April the 9th we sang at the opening of the Easter exhibition at the band club and on the 14th we had our Palm Sunday concert with the band at the Parish Church. In June we took part in a traditional Maltese concert with the band, singing at the San Ġwann tal-Ħġeġġe to a very appreciative audience in the square.

We had our concert at the Sanctuary of Our Lady on the 27th of July as part of the Iljieli Melleħin. Following this, we will be singing again at our annual concerts during the Festa and at a joint concert with the band at the small feast. Another year goes by! The great news is that we have a new recruit for these events as we welcome Chiara Balzan to the ranks of the Sopranos.

Speaking of my lovely Sopranos – sometimes I get the comment, “It’s too high!” My usual answer

is “It’s well within your vocal range, you can do it.”

So, what is vocal range? Simply, a range that describes how high and how low one’s singing voice can go. It’s a phrase that’s frequently used when talking about singing voices and when defining voices into vocal groups. This picture is quite a good example of female voice ranges where C4 is middle C on a piano:



This of course is a generalisation of the extent of the female voice. Normally, untrained singers have a much smaller range. My choir sings in 3 vocal groups: Sopranos, Mezzo Sopranos and Altos (or Contraltos). They sing notes that are comfortable for them to produce and follow parts that try not to exceed the limits of their range. My Sopranos sing from A3 to F5/G5, my Mezzo Sopranos sing from G3 to E5/F5 and my Altos sing from F3 to C5/D5. I keep their ranges in mind when I am choosing their repertoire otherwise there are cries of, “It’s too high!” In other words ... trouble!

So, what about outside the comfort zone of these vocal groups?

Here are some of the highest operatic notes sung by sopranos. Even if you do not read music you can still appreciate that if it is above the lines – it’s high!



There are competitions held to hear who can sing the best Fs as Queen of the Night and the same goes

Festa 2019 | Għaqda Muzikali Imperial il-Mellieħa



Diana Damrau as The Queen of the Night



Erin Morley as Olympia singing the Doll's Aria



for the Ab in the Doll's Aria. All these are available to hear on YouTube.

Sometimes the highest note is not so impressive when you consider **ALL** the notes that some individuals can sing from their lowest note to their highest. Here are some very impressive vocal ranges.

It is well worth going on YouTube to hear Cecilia Bartoli's sing her 4-octave range in just over

a minute! Also, if you want to be impressed, watch Natalie Dessay singing "Ah non giunge" from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*. Not only can she sing incredibly high, but she does so while dancing! So does Kristin Chenoweth singing *Glitter and be Gay* in Bernstein's *Candide*.

If you're wondering how some other singers compare, here's an interesting chart below.

So, my lovely ladies – keep singing. The more you sing, the more your voices will find their natural ranges and notes will no longer be too high. I love what you do and the fun times we have at rehearsals. Thank you for all the time and commitment you give to the choir. I wish you, your families, and all who support the Imperial Band Club a very Happy Festa.



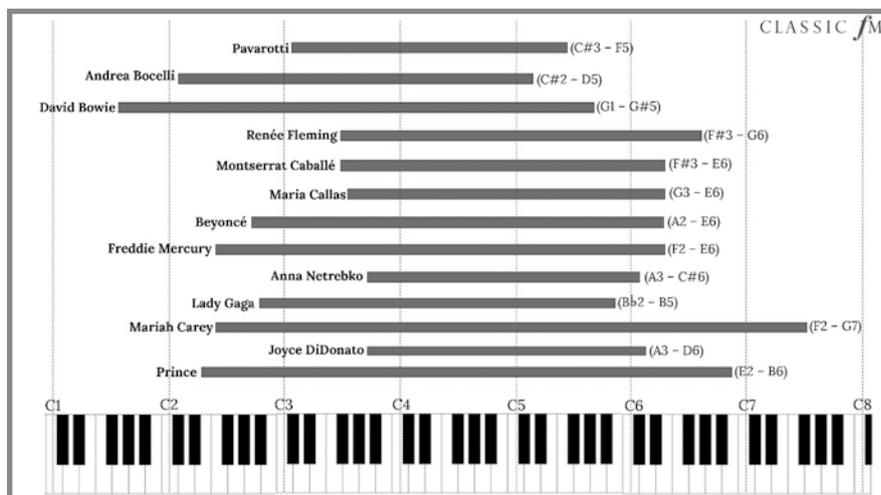
Cecilia Bartoli



Kristin Chenoweth

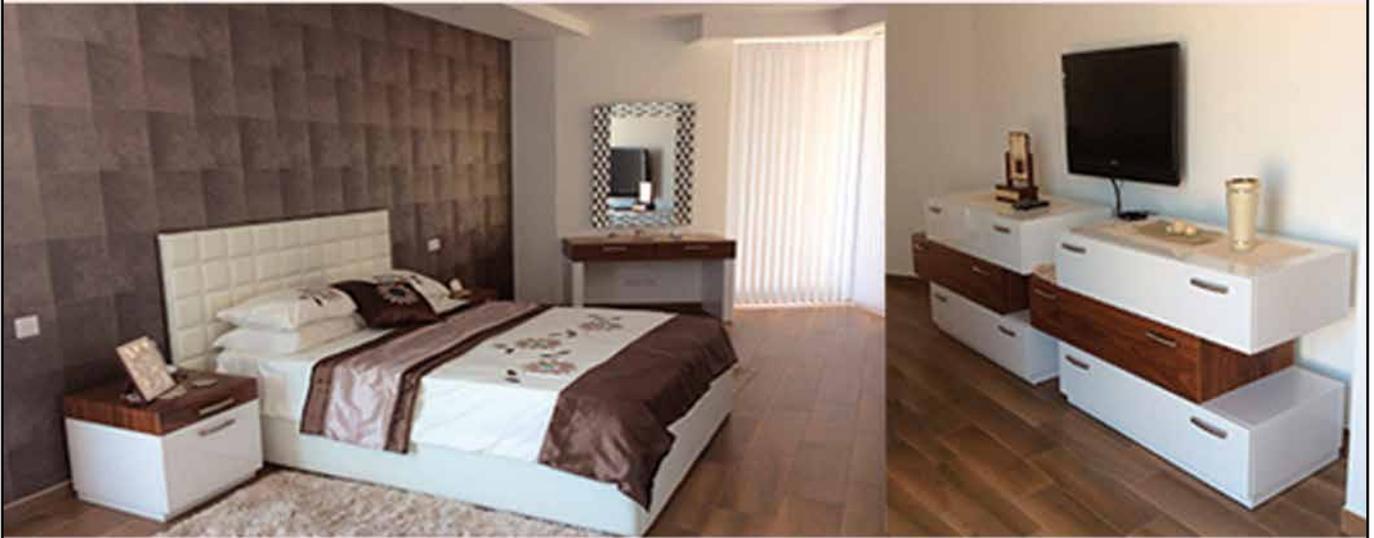


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