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Scene 2

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<th>Performer</th>
<th>Jane Southcott &amp; Dawn Joseph</th>
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Title: *Exploring and Expressing Italian Musical Heritage in Melbourne (Australia): A Women's Community Choir*

Brief Biographies

Dr Jane Southcott is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. Her phenomenological research explores music education, cultural identity and community music. She teaches in postgraduate and pre-service programs and supervises many postgraduate research students. Jane is National President of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education and a member of the editorial boards of international and national refereed journals.

Dr Dawn Joseph is a Senior Lecturer in music and education studies in the Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. She teaches in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Dawn researches, publishes and reviews in national and international journals in music education, teacher education, African music, cultural diversity and multiculturalism. She is the Deputy Chair of the Australian Society for Music Education (Victorian Chapter).

Abstract

Australia comprises many cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Belonging to community music groups by older people can enhance quality of life, offer a sense fulfilment, and provide a space through which cultural and linguistic identity may be shared and celebrated. This qualitative case study explores engagement by older members of *La Voce Della Luna*, an Italian women's community choir based in Melbourne, Victoria. Older Australians, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds frequently rely on voluntary community arts organisations to enhance quality of life. Singing together can provide ways for individuals and communities to express themselves, build community identity, improve quality of life, and celebrate cultural heritage. The members of the choir know that under their inspiring conductor they would learn new songs, new languages and new ways of performing. Their music director saw that the women’s singing together opened new horizons of social engagement and new ideas such as social justice and women's rights. This case is from the larger ongoing joint research project (2008 ongoing), *Well-being and ageing: community, diversity and the arts in Victoria*. Data were gathered from documentary sources and by individual and focus group semi-structured interviews (2013) and were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Significant themes emerged: social connection and combating isolation, the maintenance and transmission of cultural heritage, and opening horizons about music making and social justice. This paper demonstrates that active music making makes it possible for older women to learn new skills, new ideas, and create for themselves a resilient community.