Rejuvenate, rehabilitate and revive
The dementia choir concept

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The dementia choir concept

• A choir, (or choral singing)  
a form of group singing that incorporates scheduled practices and performances.
• Music Therapy  
focuses not on the musicality of the choir performances, but on the optimum level of engagement and positive experience gained for each of the choir members.
Rehabilitate

• Improve cognition through active engagement in singing, listening, carrying out instructions
• Improve mood – provide and assist in achieving individual goals, affirm abilities and achievements, social engagement
• Restore an opportunity for social engagement and a ‘sense of belonging’
• Provide a sense of independence and ‘normality’ through public performances
Liberate (cont’d)

• Giving back to the community, through performances
• Providing valuable contributions to the choir, such as choice of songs for repertoire, (and for public performances)
• Providing personal experiences/historic recall connected to the songs
Leisure

Sheer enjoyment

Social engagement

Laughing

Sharing things in common
Addressing BPSD’s through a choir

• Addressing the PWD’s unmet needs for emotional validation, meaningful activities and social interaction
• Not paying attention to, therefore not reinforcing BPSD’s
• Keeping the PWD’s stress levels as low as possible, being aware of their cognitive limitations. (IPA, 2012; Cohen-Mansfield, 2001).
Personhood

- Acknowledged for their individuality
- Given tasks to challenge their capabilities
Empirical Evidence (Songbirds choir)

- Regular attendance at the dementia choir, giving primary carer respite time
- Improved mood pre and post practice
- Decrease in BPDS’s during choir time
- Increased socialisation during choir time and other days of the week.
- Overall improvement in Quality Of Life
Empirical Evidence
Research

• (2012) DCRC (Qld) and NARI: Community dementia choir (N=15), pilot study
  – Decrease in BPSD’s: wandering, calling out,
  – Increase in social engagement
  – Increased engagement in the music, especially well known choruses of songs.
(2013) DCRC (Qld), NARI and Benetas: Residential choir (N=12) (Pilot study)
- Increase in group attendance
- Significant decrease in depression (p<0.005), inter-rater reliability not available
- Positive staff feedback
- Staff perception of choir impact very positive
- Long-term effects not noticed
Forgotten Notes

Excerpt from “Forgotten Notes” documentary on setting up a choir for people with dementia in an aged care facility
Music Therapy resources for Choirs of people with dementia

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Therapeutic Songs For People With Dementia

"Among My Souvenirs"

Dr Loretta Quinn | Registered Music Therapist

ACCOMPANIMENT FOR CHOIRS

Therapeutic Songs For People With Dementia

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• Annecto: The Songbirds Choir

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