

chromatics

the group

The Chromatics are a unique high-energy vocal band that delights audiences with a combination of outrageous originals, crazy covers, melodic insights into modern life, and a smattering of science songs. Their high energy sound and vibrant presentation will leave you asking “where’s the band?” But, there is none – all this musical mayhem is produced with nothing but six intricately linked voices. They tackle the Internet, television, and drive-through windows in their hilarious Chromatics originals. They have even written astronomically-correct *a cappella* songs to be used in classrooms for a project called AstroCappella. The Chromatics’ holiday CD, *Unwrapped*, received two CARA (Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award) nominations and their CD, *AstroCappella 2.0*, is also an educational CD-ROM containing scientific background information, images, activities, games and puzzles for each song. They and their recordings are regularly nominated for WAMMIES (Washington Area Music Awards). The Chromatics own their own sound equipment.

media

TV: PBS, CNN, WUSA (DC), KTAL (LA)
Radio: BBC Radio 4 (UK), WRNR and WNAV (MD), WLRH (AL)
Print: Feature articles: Baltimore *Sun*, Annapolis *Capital*, Huntsville *Times*
Lyrics quoted: New York *Times*, *Popular Science* and New *Scientist* (UK)

highlighted performances

Some venues where The Chromatics have performed:

- First Nights: Annapolis, Alexandria, Harrisonburg
- Washington Folk Festival, Frederick Festival of the Arts, Shreveport Red River Revel
- Kennedy Center Millennium Stage
- National Air & Space Museum, American Museum of Natural History, Maryland Science Center, Louisiana’s Sci-Port Museum, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and many planetarium shows
- Science Fiction conventions: Balticon, Philcon, Farpoint, Shore Leave

The Chromatics have presented their AstroCappella material in at education conventions and science centers from coast to coast.

Each voice in the group is beautiful and the blend and balance is outstanding.

- Bonita Lestina, Fairfax Old Town Hall

So polished, professional, and just plain nice to be around.

- Richard Hsu, Da Vinci’s Notebook

They were the group of performers at the Festival that, more than any other, received popular acclaim from the audience and generated demands that they be invited back.

- Charlie Baum, Washington Folk Festival



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group history

The **Chromatics** started as The OK Chorale in 1993, a group of 12 singers specializing in doo-wop tunes. By 1995, they'd changed their name (they got tired of requests for country music) and over the years reduced their numbers and switched their repertoire to modern pop/rock a cappella. In 1997, they won a NASA grant to write and record astronomy songs for kids and their first **two** CDs were released the following year: *First Light* and *AstroCappella*. Since then, the group has continued to write, perform, and record their original music. Their recent recordings have been nominated for Washington Area Music Awards and Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards.

discography

First Light (1998)

8 pop/rock covers and 4 originals

AstroCappella (1998)

6 astronomically-correct songs (5 original, 1 original lyrics)

Unwrapped (2000)

14 holiday songs, from the wacky to the sublime

AstroCappella 2.0 (2001)

13 original astronomy songs + extensive CD-ROM material

Mixed Messages (2003)

A mixed bag of live and studio tracks, originals and covers

Committed (2007)

An (almost) all-originals album

Shoulders of Giants (2009)

Released on the International Year of Astronomy

Wassailicious (2010)

A “piquant melange of full-bodied holiday neo-classics”

Fragments (2017)

Originals, covers, and parodies from Heraclitus to Star Wars



Chromatics perform for the First Night Alexandria finale.

music

pop/rock covers

The Chromatics cover pop and rock songs ranging from 70s rock anthems from Rush to danceable hits from Fitz and the Tantrums. Often these songs are infused with the groups own zany style, just to mix things up.

originals/science

The Chromatics have been writing, recording and performing original tunes for most of the group's history. Topics range from hard science and technology to growing up, the passage of time, bad hair and bad traffic. The Chromatics have performed at museums, science & technology festivals, planetaria, science fiction conventions and science conferences across the country.

holiday/seasonal

The Chromatics perform a wide variety of secular and religious songs including their CARA-nominated "Silent Night". Holiday repertoire includes several Hannukah songs and their humorous original tunes “The Day After Christmas” and “Phlegmish Carol”. The Chromatics have a busy holiday season performing at corporate and office holiday parties and at their own annual bash in their hometown.

They filled the room with a tapestry of rich, tightly woven harmony.

- Greenbelt News Review

Your version of ‘Good Vibrations’ would make Brian Wilson proud.

- Bill Mumy (actor)

Your harmonies are wonderful, your sense of fun is catching.

- Dick Rucker, fan

You guys rocked!

- Jeri Ryan,
“7 of 9”, *Star Trek Voyager*



Padi Boyd
music director, soprano

Padi has been pulling up the high end of the Chromatics since 1993. Her many talents run from determining whether a hand clap is more appropriate than a finger snap here, to surmising just who should be singing the seventh of that chord there, all on instinct alone. By day (and sometimes night) Padi is a NASA astrophysicist. Padi is much of the brain behind the educational AstroCappella project. Padi's motto: "When all else fails, sing the right notes."

*I'm stuck in a rut in the land of the free
Just a cog in the techno-economy
But I think Bill Gates smiled on you and me
On this entire place from sea to shining sea
- Lost It (Padi Boyd)*

*Our spiraling molecules
all look the same
Must we always be fumbling
and fighting in vain?
Can we pull together
and work out the trials yet to come?
Or keep babbling, unraveling,
traveling around the sun.
- Life Cycles (Padi Boyd)*



Scott Rohrbach
tenor extraordinaire

Scott was the first new Chromatic in 11 years, bringing another scientific mind to the group. He has sung in a variety of genres from British boys choir to Godspell, singing tenor in high school, bass in college and baritone in graduate school. He is a technology nerd who owns more mobile phones and computers than family members, and has walked across eight feet of broken glass and set his own hand on fire in the pursuit of science.

*Cut your coupons, rub the cards
And get a burger free
It's Mutant Ninja Turtle glasses
Kids, collect all three!
- Fast Food (John Meyer)*

*Just sit right down
And show them your soul
And don't touch that dial
So they can take control
- La La Land (John Meyer)*

John Meyer
boppin' tenor-baritone, vocal percussionist

John is a mild mannered satellite engineering technician by day. But at 5:00, he can read music faster than a speeding bullet (just how fast can they read?), jump large intervals in a single note. With a voice more powerful than a locomotive, he can sing bass, he can sing tenor, he's – a baritone. John writes and arranges music and has the knack for taking the most innocent of lyrical intent and twisting it into something outrageous. John's songwriting style can be best characterized as Frank Zappa meets the Swingle Singers.



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Michelle Orhan

soprano (or tenor!)

Michelle is a singer and a teacher – and our newest member. Her background in vocal performance means she teaches us a thing or two at every rehearsal, and her ability to deal with middle-schoolers means she has no trouble with the crazy Chromies. As the youngest member of the group, she's up on all the latest music and she has already injected plenty of new music into our repertoire. Michelle can sing higher and lower than any of the other Chromie women and has performed for Placido Domingo and the Pope!



Alan Smale

British bass-man, business manager

If the great a cappella basses are men of few words, Alan won't qualify anytime soon. When he isn't flirting with the altos or trying to persuade the guys to sing and dance simultaneously, he's often busy talking on the phone or fixing up publicity text in his Business Manager role. A NASA astronomer, Alan is one of the powerhouses behind the Chromies' educational AstroCappella project. His singing? Well, in addition to all those throbbing walking bass lines and incomprehensible "doom boppa dit-dit" sounds, he also lunges forth for the occasional cheeky bass solo.



*From empty homes
in suburbs that don't know us
Sending email
just to keep eachother sane
You're next to me
though we're a thousand miles apart
Living for the moment
when you write to me again
Forebrain to forebrain,
heart to keys
Palm to palm and
screen to screen*

- Passing Notes (Alan Smale)

*Been dreaming 'bout that
long-time-coming vacation
And how you're gonna finally
learn to relax
But you drive like a demon
afraid you'll miss something
You never see the stuff
that's off the beaten track
- Relax (Karen Smale)*

Karen Smale

web goddess and "Pop-Top Diva"

Karen has been singing "cleanup" (soprano, mezzo, alto and tenor!) with the Chromatics since 1993. Known as the "Pop-Top Diva" of the group, due to her (Diet) Coke™ addiction, she has been struggling to remove vibrato from her repertoire of sounds. (It's those 4 years of classical voice training... or is it the caffeine?) During the day, Karen is a Web Designer/Programmer at NASA. When she's not singing, she can often be found with her camera, taking arty photos of strange still-life subjects.

