

# Voice Ranges

When you are composing a melody that you intend people to sing, then you need to set the melody in a comfortable range for them. If you are a singer then you will be able to do this naturally with your own voice, still though you need to consider how comfortable your melody would be when sung by a member of the opposite sex. Often ladies will find some songs that are written by men too high and screechy and the opposite can be true also.

The diagram below shows the standard ranges for voices in respect to the piano keyboard. Each range spans two octaves from either C to C or G to G. Some excellent singers can extend this range into the grey areas as shown. Most men sing in the baritone to tenor range and most women sing in the alto to mezzo soprano range. Bear this in mind when composing for congregational singing. If, for example, you had a melody which begins on the low G in the tenor range then the ladies would be singing an octave above this which is the bottom of the soprano range and vice versa. It would be a good idea for you to examine songs that sound strong when congregations sing them to study the compass of the notes used. If you are composing for a specific singer then determine their comfortable range first. With practice and experience you can even 'hear' a particular person singing your song in your head, even if you do not know them personally, like Darlene Zschech for example (for those of us who don't know her!).

