2004

How can I keep from singing? | Exploring my life through song

Batya Greenwald

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/2597

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety, provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in published works and reports.

**Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature**

Yes, I grant permission

No, I do not grant permission

Author's Signature: BGreenwald

Date: 6/28/04

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with the author's explicit consent.
HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING?

EXPLORING MY LIFE THROUGH SONG

by

Batya (Barbara) Greenwald

B.A. University of Witwatersrand, South Africa 1982

H. Dip. Ed (elementary) University of Sydney, Australia 1987

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Fine Arts, Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana

August 2004

Approved by:

[Signature]
Chair, Dorothy Morrison

[Signature]
Dean, Graduate School

8-23-04 Date
How can I keep from singing? Exploring the Importance of Singing

Committee Chair: Dorothy Morrison

ABSTRACT

The Importance of Singing is a project based in the basic human desire and right to sing. My final creative project was designed to

1. continue my exploration of singing, and find teachers
2. find venues for presentation,
3. culminate in orchestrating my own recital.

I began my exploration of singing by just doing it. I joined a performance singing class that took place one evening a week. I also found a private vocal teacher, and had lessons once or twice a week.

Singing also made its way into my kindergarten classroom. Before morning circle (where we already sang rhymes and songs) we did a warm-up learned from my vocal coach. The children’s voices sounded different to me; more open and accessible.

I read books about singing. I learned about the academics of what I was actually doing in performance class, and I read about the importance of singing, not only with adults, but giving children the opportunity to hear the live voice, their own and those around them.

The culmination of it all was my singing performance on April 17, 2004. With a 3-piece band I sang 12 songs to an audience of more than 70 people in Boulder, Colorado.

I had no idea of the journey that lay ahead and this project also explores the metaphor of what it was for me to ‘find my voice’.
Table of Contents

Project Intent ............................................................................................................. page 1
Background Information ............................................................................................. page 1
Project Development: The Journey Continues ...................................................... page 4
The Show ..................................................................................................................... page 16
Discoveries Along the Way ....................................................................................... page 18
Expected Outcomes .................................................................................................. page 19
Unexpected Outcomes ............................................................................................... page 19
Project’s Impact on Self, Teaching and Future Work .......................................... page 21
Appendices ............................................................................................................... page 25
Bibliography .............................................................................................................. page 38
Project Intent

As I left my second summer at the Creative Pulse, I was filled with a sense of possibility that had to do with my voice. I had performed a mini-concert for my field project presentation and had been encouraged by Randy Bolton, one of my professors, to put together a full-fledged concert for my final performance. Without fully understanding what was ahead of me, this seemed like the natural next step. My intention was to continue with my performance singing class and to find a teacher for private lessons. I had been told by Karen Callan, fellow Creative Pulse student and voice teacher, that I needed to expand my range, and particularly to sing in my head voice.

I intended to work toward a March/April concert. I had initially thought that the concert would include some solos, some songs with my kindergartners and some with my own daughters. I knew I wanted to sing some songs from my embedded cultures, South Africa and Israel, and express my Jewish roots. I had intended the concert to be for the school community, as well as for family and friends. I thought that I would see which parent musicians I could get together for a band.

Background Information

The story of my voice began for me as a child growing up in South Africa. Luckily, as a baby I had an African nanny, Johanna, who would strap me on her
back and sing, as she went about her chores. I was raised on the rhythms of her back, the undulating tones that I felt rippling through her body, as I lay content on her back. They say that the people who sing to us love us, and these lullabies were my first songs.

When I was six years old, I spontaneously began to stutter. It began while mimicking my older sister who stuttered, and then it took on a life of its own. Even though I continued with drama classes, by my teens, I was using my voice less and less. Then I stuttered my way through a recital. That did it. I dropped out of my drama classes and shied away from public speaking as much as I could. Another time, a choir teacher had asked me to “mouth the words”, the night before a big performance. The feeling of shame that arose is still palpable, and I took those words to heart.

At around the same time, I had taken up the guitar and was transported when I played and sang. A singing teacher told me to focus first on learning the craft of playing guitar. Maybe there were some other reasons, but I took all this to mean that my voice was not good enough and have lived with that notion ever since. Interestingly enough, even though I agreed with the notion that my voice was somehow inadequate, my longing to sing remained. In Western culture, we do not often have the opportunity to sing, unless the voice is accomplished, and this leads to a silencing of the singing voice. It was only in my twenties, when I
joined a spiritual community that chanted together, that my voice was given a safe haven in which to emerge.

In the summer of 2002, when this unrequited longing to sing became apparent, I knew it was time to act. It was with much fear and arising shame, as well as excitement, that I sang my first solo, “Isn’t it Holy?” at the Creative Pulse.

After that I joined a performance singing class, led by a very dear friend, Marlene Carvalho, who held the safe space I needed to begin my journey. For the first few months I could not sing without crying. As my voice emerged from different parts of my body so hurt and shame arose too. Paul Newham in The Singing Cure says that once we begin to sing, all of the emotions that were once locked away in different chambers of our being begin to emerge. It was definitely that way with me. Memories of past trauma involving my voice began to emerge - whether in dreams or visceral response. It became clear to me that as a child I received the message that I was too much, too loud, expressing too much emotion. So, when I sang, the feeling of being too much, of scaring people off, became real again.

By the time I performed my mini-concert at the Creative Pulse, 2003, I was beginning to understand the difference between feeling all these emotions and using them in my expression of voice, as opposed to becoming overwhelmed by them.
I had other motivations for choosing singing. I intuited that 'finding my voice' would allow me to transform other areas of my life. I had been feeling for some time a nagging sense of frustration that I wasn’t living as fully as I could, or as I wanted to. I wondered if the metaphor for freeing and finding my voice would be felt in how I was living my life.

I sensed that the power of song might allow for healing to take place, and that once I had a fuller expression of my voice, I would also have a fuller expression of my life as a whole.

**Project Development: The Journey Continues**

My journey continued when I returned to Boulder and to my performance singing class. My presence and my voice were different since The Pulse, and I could now begin to learn about being as present to the moment as possible. The feedback and witnessing that I was getting from this class was profound, and Marlene coached me on how to work with energy in a room and how to tap deeply into my own.

I felt so grateful that I had this class, and I began to feel ready to take some larger strides in my voice development. Marlene was an obvious choice for private lessons. However, being that she is one of my closest friends, there was a way in
which I took her praise and support of me for granted. I couldn’t quite explain it at the time, but I think I was ready for someone more removed from my life, someone who could possibly be more objective.

In September I began to look for a teacher with whom to do private work. I had heard that a very talented and eccentric teacher, Casey Collins, had recently returned to Boulder and had opened his studio to new students. I went for a trial lesson. Casey has worked with huge stars in Los Angeles and New York, and an actor who needed voice enhancement left the studio as I walked in. I felt very out of my element. Once Casey heard my story, and what I was hoping to accomplish (voice development, expanded range, singing in head voice, preparing for a concert), he felt as though there was much that he could teach me. I was willing to trust the process, even though his eccentricities were at first difficult for me to overcome. For example, he almost immediately seized upon the fact that my accent was negatively impacting my singing - and set about trying to change it. He mirrored my voice back to me - exaggerating the lateralization of my vowels. At first it was very painful to be seen and heard in such an intimate and judgmental way. He also would say things like, “Stop! Who is holding back your voice, Batya? Go away and leave her alone now so she can have her instrument back!” I would sheepishly glance around the room, and, of course, no one was there. But after that my voice would be able to reach a note previously out of its reach.
We studied the vowel ‘u’ for weeks. Casey refused to proceed until I knew how to seat the sound at the back of my relaxed larynx. There were many moments by the piano doing a scale yet again, when I wondered what I had gotten myself into.

Once ‘u’ was seated in my larynx, we proceeded to the other vowels, in a specific and sequential manner. The belief that correct pronunciation of vowels is the cornerstone of good singing is corroborated by many sources. Roger Love, in Set Your Voice Free, says that “a high larynx is one of the most common problems affecting speakers and singers, but it is very simple to get the larynx to its proper position with a series of low-larynx exercises.” Eventually I gave up struggling and spent many hours with my practice tapes singing my vowels, and watching my larynx in the mirror. In time, I saw and heard the difference.

After a few months, we began to work on the songs that I was singing in my performance class. I would meet with an accompanist and decide on a key. He would then make me a copy of the instrumental music in my key, with which to practice. At home, often in front of a mirror to check for mouth position, I would practice the songs.

Singing is really self-searching. There is a way in which the cry from the heart is at the core of who we are. The level of exposure that is necessary for the voice to
emerge is profound. Even standing in front of the mirror with no one else around was sometimes more than I could bear.

Performance class served well in many respects, but especially in regards to my vulnerability. I learned that being exposed was okay. I learned that I was in fact not too much, and that what was being requested was to expose more of who I was (and am), because that is where the juice is. At some point I realized that it was my responsibility to put meaning into the songs that I was singing. It seems obvious, but this realization took my singing to another dimension, as I dug deeper to find the nuances of my expression.

Observing others in their process was enlightening too. I studied people singing through resistance (or not). I watched how the metaphor extended into their lives. I realized that it is not always wise to just push past resistance for the sake of growth, but that sometimes resistance is there as a service, something for us to pay attention to before we just blast through it. I got to see how graceful growth can be when we respect our own process and that of others. The fact that I was ready to grow made it easier for me to feel my terror and sing through it.

I still had all kinds of different ideas about who would be included in the concert to sing with me, and who would be invited. I decided to leave that for a while and just focus on improving my voice.
In December, Marlene put on a show with all of us in Performance class. I had prepared three songs:

“I Don’t Know How to Love Him” from Jesus Christ Superstar

“Let it Be” by the Beatles

“Forever Young” by Joan Baez.

Marlene introduced us and invited me up on stage. This time, I was so much more confident than the first time I had sung six months prior. Half way through my first song I caught sight of two dear friends in the second row. This was the first time they had heard me sing, and they were both crying. Before I could stop myself, the tears began to flow. It was as if they were reminding me what a huge thing I was doing, and I lost my poise. It was a powerful moment, to feel how far I had come and then to feel my control slip away. I sang through my tears, and got through the song, but not as meaningfully as I would have liked.

I realized something else. If I want to move people, it requires that I stay centered and not exhibit huge emotions myself. When that happens it makes my audience empathize with me, which takes away from them the gift of their own emotional response.
It was only a week after this show that I left for Australia to celebrate my father’s 70th birthday. The family had planned a big party, along with a jazz pianist, saxophonist and singer. My father is a long-time jazz aficionado, and I had decided to sing “Unforgettable” for him. My trepidation about losing it before I even began to sing was enormous, and I had spent much time thinking about how to keep my own emotions in check, so that my father and the audience could feel theirs.

The evening arrived. December 15, 2003, a beautiful and balmy evening. We were in a restaurant in the middle of a glorious park. After my brother made a funny, short toast, he introduced me. For my father, and for my extended family and friends, this was the first they knew about my singing. I was determined not to cry. I began by suggesting that Aubrey (my father) do the crying, so that I could do the singing. And the spell was broken. The conscious and out-loud request was all it took. The song went off beautifully; half way through my dad came up and we finished off in duet. For the first time, I actually thought my voice sounded half-decent. It was another major step in my development as a singer.

A few days later, my father made an off-handed comment regarding my singing. “Don’t give up your day job,” he said. The comment made me really angry. What did he mean? Don’t give up my newfound expression? Don’t give up my
joy? Once I had calmed down, I told him how the comment had made me feel and we had one of those deeply cleansing conversations. It was another way in which I used my voice not only for clarity but for healing as well.

Returning to Boulder, I made a fresh commitment to my performance class and my private lessons. I began to look for new material in earnest. I made more time to practice. I began to make a checklist for the show (Appendix A). Having Marlene and Casey as mentors and guides was invaluable, as they coached me on next steps. There were many details that needed to be managed and I began to look for support from friends and fellow singers. Everyone I asked was so happy to be involved.

I also began to narrow my song list and realized that the show was becoming more about adult themes such as growing up, war and peace, bullying, and longing, and that it was not going to work to do a concert with my kindergartners. I also realized that I would only invite people whom I trusted to fully support the emergence of my voice. I felt too vulnerable to invite the whole school community, but hand picked individuals who understood some of what I had been through. I was concerned that I might blow it on the evening of the show, and so the people who were there needed to be able to hold me in that, if that were the case.
Next was choosing my back-up band. At first I thought I would just have piano accompaniment, but as I went to other concerts and listened closely, I appreciated both the variation of arrangements that a bigger band has to offer and the more interesting dynamics that present themselves on stage. I had originally thought I would compose a band from talented parents in my class, but soon realized that I needed to find the most professional people available, as I needed to feel as supported as possible. As a young singer, I wanted people who could hold and support my emerging voice. After deciding on Brian Juan (the accompanist in my performance class), we found a bass guitarist and drummer through Marlene. I made them a CD of all my chosen songs, as well as copies of the sheet music. This allowed them to be well prepared for my rehearsal.

At first, I had decided to have the concert in Casey’s studio. As the time got closer, it became apparent to me that Casey needed to control my show in a way that felt uncomfortable to me. I knew that he had incredible expertise in helping me to open my instrument, and I knew that I would want him on the day of the performance to do that, but I needed to feel as though it was my show and not his. At least, being out of his studio would help. So, in the last month I found an alternative space. It was a beautiful room in our local Chautauqua Community House, which seated 80 people with ease. It felt really good to get clear about what I needed from both Casey and Marlene as well as the band and my
soundman. I knew I was finding my voice by being as overtly clear as possible.

Two weeks before the show my parents came for a visit. My mother and I went shopping for an outfit to wear, that would embody the feel of what I was hoping to convey. Something professional, graceful and with a certain flair. We found the perfect dress, and I realized the importance of taking care of the visual impact as well as just my voice.

I had a rehearsal with the band, and all went well. I had invited a friend to sing harmonies to a favorite Israeli/Arabic peace song and she came to rehearse with the band. Her comment was that she felt great energy moving between us all, and felt welcomed into it. That was what I was looking for. We figured out beginnings and endings of songs and I realized the value of listening deeply to the bass player as he was feeding me the root of the note I was singing. This helped me with a few of those challenging pitches.

The final week arrived. At this point I realized that the only thing between me and a good concert was my mind. If I could stay centered and focused on the reasons behind my singing I would be okay.

I focused on my goals. I was going to:

* Publicly claim my voice
* Gift my audience with my vulnerability of being seen
* Give myself permission to own my voice, and in this way, allow others to claim theirs

* Show what is possible if we follow our longing

* Use my voice as blessing

The Wednesday before the show I had my final performance class. I was working on a song that I was going to dedicate to my husband, Jonathan.

“That’s What Love is For” by Amy Grant, is about the challenge of intimate relationships and how amazing it is that through our love we are able to overcome the difficult times. I was still struggling with some pitches in the song, as well as its raw emotional content. I had decided that if I couldn’t sing it that night I would toss it from the show. This time I allowed more of my vulnerability to come through my voice and loosened up when I didn’t hit notes on perfect pitch. The class was moved and adamant I keep it in. I left feeling steady and confident. I realized that of course the show was not going to be perfect, but if I could be as present as possible, it would be the best that it could be.

Thursday night before the show I had my final lesson with Casey. We did not sing much. Instead, we focused on last-minute nagging concerns, and attempted to resolve them. It was important to give voice to all my logistic worries and think through who would be handling the details. At the end, Casey led an
invocation to my guides that I be supported and shielded in the process and that my highest purpose for doing the show be met and deeply received by my audience. I came home on an absolute high and struggled to fall asleep.

Now, I hadn’t been sleeping very well for the last few weeks. I would wake up in the middle of the night, usually between two and three a.m., and lie there full of wonder. Or else I would be thinking about the program that I had not yet written, about the flow of the show, the order of the songs, and what I wanted to say about them. I was filled to overflowing with the gratitude I felt towards my teachers and the generosity that my family had shown in giving me the time and space in which to focus on this show.

I would usually get out of bed and head to the computer to work on any of the above areas. On the Thursday before the show, I woke up at 3 a.m. The program was beginning to come together, and in the wee hours of the morning I put the final touches on it. At five a.m. I was sitting next to my daughter Noa’s bed, watching her sleep. She woke up and I climbed into bed with her. After a while I asked her if she wanted to go to Kinko’s with me. Her reply was “Mom! It’s still dark outside!” Yes, it was. We climbed in the car and while working at Kinko’s on the program (Appendix B), we watched the sun rise in all its splendor. It was an incredible moment. Luckily, I had organized a substitute teacher for the day and had only to drop the kids off at school and attend to the
last-minute details. I was in an altered state. It felt as though the veils of normal living were coming down. I saw a beggar on the corner, rolled down my widow to give him a few dollars, and cried the rest of the way home. It was as though the pain of the world, that I do not often allow to penetrate, was going straight to my heart. As my heart was breaking open, so more love was able to penetrate and be released.

And so the big day arrived. I awoke early, full of gratitude for my journey so far. No matter what, I already felt different, as though I had expanded my being to include more of what was real in the world and I had greater capacity for empathy than before.

After breakfast, I went for a swim at our local recreation center and recited my lines as I did my laps. I came home and got the house ready for Dorothy Morrison, one of my Creative Pulse professors who was coming to Boulder to watch my performance. I felt relaxed and excited at the same time. I was ready. I stopped in at Casey’s so he could help me warm up my voice and then came home to shower. A friend came over to help me as we transported odds and ends over to the Community House.

When the band arrived, we did sound check and I began to get ready. Casey came later than agreed. At first I was worried, but then realized (happily) that
everything he had taught me was now inside, and even if he never made it, I would be fine. When Casey did arrive, he began to make demands of the band and soundman in a way that was not entirely respectful. The ambiance changed. Tension began to mount. Marlene was concerned about the time it was taking to do the sound check and had issues about feeling left out. Casey was upset because he felt as though the soundman was ignoring his requests. I began to lose my center. Navigating all those personalities became too much, and I eventually retreated back to my dressing room.

Those few moments before the show are still a little of a mystery for me. It was incredibly painful to be in that state of dissonance after the bliss I had been feeling. Casey and Marlene came in, I told them all I needed was for them to make peace. They tried, but at some point I realized that the only person who could make it different was me. I removed myself, sounding my frustration by growling and doing my basic warm up routine. By the time I walked to the stage, the strangest calm was beginning to descend. Once I started to sing “Tula Tula”, the lullaby Johanna used to sing to me as a child, the tension began to dissipate. There was only my breath and my voice.

The Show

There are times in life, where we are graced by something far bigger than ourselves. In my case, I had the added fortune of actually being inside this state
of grace as I walked to the stage and being very aware of it. The cynical part of me may say my fear had transported me to an altered state of awareness, yet, I didn’t feel fear. I felt excitement and a deep sense that I had waited my whole life for this moment. It was a moment to express myself fully. It was a moment to give back to the people who had supported me on my journey. It was a moment in which to shine my light and not be afraid that I would be too much. Or that if I was, it didn’t mean that I had to diminish because of it.

So there it was. I sang “Tula Tula”, feeling Johanna so close to me, hearing her voice through my own. When I sang “Let it Be”, “Mother Mary comes to me,” I felt her standing right in front of me. Whatever the words may be for the Divine Mother’s presence, she was in the room.

There were many moments in the show where I would look into someone’s eyes, and they were crying. Instead of being overwhelmed by their tears, I acknowledged them and breathed them in, and then sang out to them with even more richness and depth. Everyone was moved, and I sensed how I was taking them on this journey to the depth of their being. The purpose of my singing had changed. It had become a vehicle for a collective journey and was no longer about just my voice.

When I sang my final song, “How Can I Keep From Singing?” my voice was
finally free. It felt as though the song was being sung through me and I just relaxed into it. My voice soared as I declared my resistance to tyrants and persecutors and my love of friends both near and far. I felt as though I had come home. That my voice did in fact matter, and that it is my duty to find ways in which to share it. I felt incredible gratitude to Dorothy Morrison for being there as witness and to all my professors in The Creative Pulse program for being the impetus for this reclamation.

**Discoveries Along the Way**

I have come to believe that singing is our birthright. It is not a luxury, but a necessary way of being in the world. When we are born, our first cries are songs of our spirit, and we are born with an expanded range of pitch, from highs to lows. As infants we do not yet know that our voices are not so welcomed in the world. Soon enough, especially in our Western world, babies are pacified or nursed or somehow shushed to stop making so much noise. Our original, expanded range becomes smaller, and before we know it, most people are using a fraction of their range as they speak in the world.

Especially in the Western world, this has led to a silencing of the singing voice. Paul Newham in *The Singing Cure* is of the belief that everyone in fact possesses a singing voice. My belief was that I was tone deaf and would never really be able to sing well. I have discovered that by desire and will, it is possible to train
my voice. As I carry on with this work, I am now convinced that my voice will continue to improve and strengthen.

**Expected Outcomes**

I had hoped to extend the breadth, depth, strength, flexibility and fluidity of my vocal range. I had hoped to develop a repertoire of songs that would be meaningful to me and my audience. I had hoped to feel less shame about the sound of my voice. I wondered if the metaphor for freeing and finding my voice would be felt in my relationships and in my work with children. I tentatively expected some kind of inner change.

**Unexpected Outcomes**

I had no idea about the transformation that was to take place. My voice had been strengthening up until the concert, but it was only when I was in front of that supportive audience that I truly felt its power. In that moment, I felt as though the world was wide open to me, as though I was in control of my destiny. It was an intense feeling to have a bodily experience of my potential as a voice in the world. Right along with it came a sense of responsibility too. It was as though I realized I now have the know-how to speak for other people who may not yet know how to say it for themselves.

Voice Movement therapy teachers like Paul Newham and Anne Brownell explain that often when we begin to sing, we tap into old wounds that have to do
directly with our voice, or with our expression in the world. Voice Movement Therapy is “in essence an exploration of the self through vocal expression ......
integrates with psychotherapeutic principles and practices to create a specific vocal modality for therapeutic work.” (International Association for Voice Movement Therapy Web Site)

A brief knowledge of VMT principles helped me to navigate the overwhelming emotions I experienced after the show. I had lived with the belief that if I truly had my creative fire, my passion and my strong opinions that I would be abandoned by those closest to me.

Right after the show, both Marlene and my husband felt distanced and upset with me (for different reasons), and this confirmed my long-held belief that I would in fact be left alone. Through dialogue and soul searching I have come to see that it doesn’t have to be that way, and that I in fact, had a lot to do with isolating them from my inner experience so that I could feel abandoned yet again. These realizations were an unexpected gift that grew out of the aftermath of the show, and the process continues.

I had expected the show to be the end of this vocal road. I think because it had been such a challenging, and at times torturous journey for me, I convinced myself that after the concert I would never have to sing before an audience again.
That was before the show. When I looked into the audience and saw the release of emotion and how many people were so deeply touched, I knew I needed to continue. Friends came up to me afterwards and told me story after story of how inspired they now were to work on their own creative projects that they had previously been scared to do. When I reflected back on the incredible grace that I felt while singing for an audience, I knew I needed to have that in my life more, as well. It was as though my Life Force was at its strongest, pulsing within me as I sang it out to the world.

Bernice Johnson Reagon in *We Who Believe in Freedom* says, “If you have a voice, you must use it for your people and speak to the world you live in, and if you are alive you must shape your world.”

Another unexpected and uncomfortable outcome was the longing that I felt when I sang. It feels like an ancient longing - to return to Mother Earth, to be deeply seen, to find the stillness behind the song. I have made peace with the feeling enough to know that the chances are that I may always feel that way, and that singing can actually speak to that longing in a direct way. Singing is my soul’s reflection.

**Project’s Impact on Self, Teaching and Future Work**

At the very least, I know I will keep on singing. It seems I no longer have a
choice but to express my aliveness through song.

I am now in the conversation about what my voice is needed for. I want to use my songs to reflect the world that I see. I want my singing to proclaim my resistance:

* to bullying - in schools, and countries that invade other countries.
* to abuse of women and children.
* to injustices in the world.
* and to the silencing of our songs.

I am doing this in my small way.

Last night, at my final parent’s evening, I sang “Don’t Laugh at Me” accompanied by one of my kindergarten student’s dad on guitar. At first I was very shy, my voice was tentative, and I could hardly look around. But when I did, I saw parents very moved and very present to their own feelings in the moment. They could touch upon their own experiences while being washed away by the song. I see how these experiences are important to confirm the part of me that is singer.

I spoke to the parents about the importance of singing to their children. We sang simple chants and melodies which reinforced the idea that singing is not about having a good voice, but about the freeing act of moving sound through our
bodies. Remember, the people who sing to us love us best of all.

I have recently decided that when my performance singing class has its concert in June, I will sing with them. I do not want to idealize my solo concert; rather, I want to remember what it is like to be as present in song as one can be in the moment.

I have signed up for a four-day singer-songwriting workshop in August. It takes place before the Rocky Mountain Folk Festival, and is taught by many of the great folk singers of our time. Next year I will be teaching third grade, and I am already dreaming about how I will bring singing and song-writing into their lives.

I am in the process of applying for my family and I to volunteer at an AIDS/HIV clinic in South Africa. It happens to be in Rustenburg, where Johanna (my nanny) lived. It now feels like more than just a possibility, but a way to make peace with my past and give back in a very real way.

Singing has bought joy into my life in a new way. If there is a song going round in my head, I understand that it is there for a reason. And I bring it to out-loud expression. Bernice Johnson Reagon says that we can use these songs to reveal and work over some aspect of our internal condition and bring added strength and peace to our lives. I have found this to be true. My songs acknowledge the suffering of life, but also savor the beauty and incredible grace that surround us.
Singing is my way home. I now have the tools to find myself through my voice when I am in the midst of chaos. I know how to breathe so as to find connection to my voice, and it brings me back to center. This process in itself, has been worth the whole trip. I will do whatever I can to keep the channel of my voice open and continue to sing my way home.

In the words of pioneer modern dancer Martha Graham, “There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you to action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. If you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not our business to determine how good it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is only our business to keep the channel open.”
Appendix A

Checklist for the show

Space

Chairs

Sound

Lights

Musicians

Flowers

Candle

Cloth

Water and Tea on stage

Welcome at door

Programs

Donation sign and box

Food

Drink

Tablecloths

Platters

Plates and glassware

Napkins
Appendix B

Program from The Show  April 17, 2004
Singing to my father at his 70th birthday

My Final Performance

One of my teachers - Casey Collins
Singing a duet together- What a Wonderful World
How Can I Keep from Singing?  Enya

My life goes on in endless song
above earth's lamentations,
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear its music ringing,
it sounds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?

While though the tempest loudly roars,
I hear the truth it liveth.
And though the darkness 'round me close,
songs in the night it giveth.

No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble in their fear
and hear their death knell ringing,
when friends rejoice both far and near
how can I keep from singing?

In prison cell and dungeon vile
our thoughts to them are winging,
when friends by shame are undefiled
If You Want to Sing Out

If you want to sing out, sing out
and if you want to be free be free
coz there’s a million things to be
you know that there are

And if you want to live high live high
and if you want to live low live low
coz there’s a million ways to go
you know that there are

You can do what you want
the opportunity’s on
and if you find a new way
you can do it today
and you can make it all true
and you can make it undo, you see
aha aa - its easy aha aa - you only need to know

Well if you want to say yes, say yes
and if you want to say no, say no
coz there’s a million ways to go
you know that there are

and if you want to be me be me
and if you want to be you be you
coz there’s a million things to do
you know that there are

Chorus:
If you want to sing out
Let It Be

Beatles

When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
speaking words of wisdom - let it be

And in my hour of darkness
she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom - let it be

LET IT BE x4
Speaking words of wisdom

And when the broken hearted people
living in the world agree
there will be an answer - let it be

For though they may be parted
there is still a chance that they will see
there will be an answer - let it be

LET IT BE x4
There will be an answer
LET IT BE x4
Whisper words of wisdom
INSTRUMENTAL

And when the night is cloudy
there is still a light that shines on me
shine until tomorrow - let it be

I wake up to the sound of music
Mother Mary comes to me
whisper words of wisdom - let it be

LET IT BE x4 There will be an answer
Let it be
LET IT BE x4 Whisper words of wisdom
Let it be

30
Slipping through my fingers
Abba

School bag in hand she leaves home in the early morning
waving goodbye with a absent-minded smile
I watch her go with a sense of that well-known sadness
and I have to sit down for a while

The feeling that I’m losing her forever
and without really entering her world
I’m glad whenever I can share her laughter
that funny little girl

Slipping through my fingers all the time
I try to capture every minute The feeling in it
Slipping through my fingers all the time
Do I really see what’s in her mind
each time I think I’m close to knowing she keeps on growing
Slipping through my fingers all the time

Sleep in our eyes, her and me at the breakfast table
Barely awake I let precious time go by
then when she’s gone there’s that odd melancholy feeling
and a sense of guilt I can’t deny

What happened to the wonderful adventures?
The places I had planned for us to go
Well, some of them we did and some we didn’t
and why I just don’t know

Chorus:

Sometimes I wish that I could freeze the picture
and save it from the funny tricks of time
Slipping through my fingers

School bag in hand she leaves home in the early morning
waving good bye with an absent-minded smile
That’s what love is for                  Amy Grant

Sometimes we make it harder than it is
Take a perfect night
and fill it up with words we don’t mean
dark sides best unseen
and we wonder why we’re feeling this way

Sometimes I wonder if we really feel the same
why we can be unkind
Questioning the strongest of hearts
that’s when we must start
believing in the one thing
that has gotten us this far

CHORUS:
That’s what love is for
to help us through it
that’s what love is for

Nothing else can do it
melt our defenses
bring us back to our senses

Give us strength to try once more
baby that’s what love is for
Sometimes I see you
and you don’t know that I’m there
And I am washed away
by emotions I hold deep down inside
getting stronger with time
Its living through the fire
and holding on we find

CHORUS:
Believing in the one thing
That has gotten us this far

CHORUS:
Round off the edges
Talk us down from the ledges
Give us strength to try once more that’s what love is for
32
What a wonderful world    Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green, red roses too
I watch them bloom for me and you
and I think to myself what a wonderful world

I see skies of blue, clouds of white
bright blessed day and the dark sacred night
and I think to myself what a wonderful world

the colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky
are also on the faces of people walking by
I see friends holding hands saying "how do you do"
they’re really saying “I Love You”

I hear babies crying I watch them grow
They’ll learn much more than I’ll ever know
and I think to myself what a wonderful world
Child of Mine     Carole King

Although you see the world different from me
Sometimes I can touch upon the wonders that you see
All the new colors and pictures you’ve designed
Oh sweet darling so glad you are a child of mine

Child of mine, child of mine
Oh sweet darling so glad you are a child of mine

You don’t need direction you know which way to go
I don’t want to hold you back, I just want to let you go
You’re the one who taught me you don’t have to look behind
Oh sweet darling, so glad you are a child of mine

Chorus:

Nobody’s gonna kill your dreams
Or tell you how to live your life
There’ll always be people who make it hard for a while
But you’ll change their heads when they see you smile

The times you were born in may not have been the best
But you can make the times to come better than the rest
I know you will be honest if you can’t always be kind
Oh sweet darling so glad you are a child of mine

Chorus:
Don’t Laugh at Me       Steve Seskin

I’m a little boy in glasses the one they call the geek
A little girl who never smiles ’coz I got braces on my teeth
And I know how it feels to cry myself to sleep

I’m that kid on every playground whose always chosen last
I’m the one whose slower than the others in my class
You don’t need to be my friend but is it too much to ask?

Don’t laugh at me don’t call me names
Don’t get your pleasure from my pain
In G-d’s eyes we’re all the same
Someday we’ll all have perfect wings
Don’t laugh at me

I’m the beggar on the corner, you pass me on the street
I wouldn’t be out here begging if I had enough to eat
Don’t think I don’t notice that our eyes never meet

I was born a little different, do my thinking from this chair
I pretend it doesn’t hurt me when people point and stare
There’s a simple way to show me just how much you care

Chorus;

I’m fat I’m thin
I’m short I’m tall
I’m deaf I’m blind
Hey aren’t we all
Forever Young

Joan Baez

May g-d bless and keep you always
May your wishes all come true
May you always do for others and let others do for you

May you build a ladder to the stars
Climb on every one
and may you stay forever young

May you grow up to be righteous
May you grow up to be true
May you always know the truth
and see the light surrounding you

May you always be courageous
Stand up and be strong
May you stay forever young

Forever Young x2
May you stay forever young

May your hands always be busy
May your feet always be swift
May you have a strong foundation
when the winds of changes shift

May your heart always be joyful
May your song always be sung
and may you stay forever young

Forever young x2
may you stay forever young
People Get Ready

People get ready
there’s a train a-coming
You don’t need no baggage
you just get on board
All you need is faith
to hear the diesel humming
You don’t need no ticket
you just thank the Lord

People get ready
for the train to Jordan
Picking up passengers
from coast to coast
Faith is the key
to open up the borders
There’s hope for all if you love the most
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Sweet Honey in the Rock.  Woman Gather. (CD Audio)


