

Singing For Your Life.

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'I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.'
W. B. Yeats.

The singing voice can bring to the surface the adverse experiences that affect not just a voice but also a whole life. Working through these problems in order to release the supported, full range of a voice can also put a person in touch with their own core and enable them to communicate fully with the outside world. I am exploring the connections that the human voice has with both the conscious and the unconscious mind, intrinsically linking the past with the present, and expressed in the grain of the voice.

1. The **D**ream. Interpretations. **D**ream **S**ongs.

How the singing /speaking voice can be exemplified in dreams: in the unconscious.

2. The extended voice: aspects of self. How releasing the use of a more expressive and extensive voice can liberate the *whole* person's ability to communicate. In confronting emotion and memory, that which often lies buried beneath the surface, we are facing the demons, and singing /speaking the unspeakable. This raises the question of working with the voice at the interface between the therapeutic, the holistic and the technical.

3. The body, its sensations and emotions. The very specific link between releasing tensions in the body and the release of inner tensions, and the exploration of emotions. The voicing of those emotions.

4. Catharsis through song. The performer. How things can go wrong if the singing voice, as in sometimes the case in the performing singer, is used as a singular substitute for confronting deeply rooted and submerged emotions. Presenting one aspect of self.

5. Expressive **A**rt. **S**ongs and **P**oems. Improvisation and **M**asks.

1. The **D**ream.

Sinking into the silent abyss

The Slug Man.

The ship was disintegrating, the devastating scene generating an intolerable uproar. It seemed to penetrate each and every tiny cell inside my body; my bones, my heart, my limbs, my blood; all were trembling in response to the tumult. An ominous cacophony of shrieking steel and iron; a furious rumbling of heavy seas, gathered in a mighty assault on the senses, the whole awful clamour of it permeating the atmosphere and lending it a bewildering terror. The skies, the earth and the sea; the entire world it seemed, was in a fury. I clamped my hands over my ears, and attempted to defend myself from its horrendous onslaught. I wanted to scream it; to holler and shout it out of existence. Nothing. My mouth was open, stretched to its widest capacity, but the sounds I wanted to give voice to lay soundless upon my tongue.

My mouth was moving; not making a sound.

As I stood in terror in the dark, harsh and formidable wetness, I saw a crowd of shadowy charcoal like figures emerge from the bowels of the ship, their bodies bent in grave and urgent activity, yet all were strangely silent. I heard no words; no cries. Eerily, scarily silent. 'Why are they so subdued; why do they not cry out in fear?'

They worked in mute accord with one another, a barely contained and desperate energy was implied in their bodies as they laboured, half obscured in a murky corner of the deck. The figures became tall and spiky, peculiarly elongated as if transformed under the light of evening shadows. But for shadow there has to be a sun, a light, and there was no sun or light. The world was sunless; grey and lightless, chill and devoid of warmth. It became apparent that a flotilla of small boats was being launched into the dark churning water below. I could not see the boats, but I knew that they were there.

The cold, grey, iron vessel lurched dangerously, and the noise of the steel, iron and creaking wood raged, a mysterious and sombre sound, as if the very heart and soul of the tumultuous seas surrounding the destruction before my eyes were groaning in sympathy for the dying ship, A terrible wordless agony. A harsh and fuming cry of torment and I could not stand it. The human silence and the cacophony of sounds on the heaving ship became a bizarre contradiction.

An uncanny juxtaposition of tumult and silence.

Stumbling, my feet unsteady, my balance disturbed, and with a vile & noxious fear in my belly, I began the attempt to edge slowly along the hard, iron and slippery passage way towards the silent people, wanting to be placed in a boat and taken away from this awful place. A man, wearing an immaculate white turban, and flowing voluminous robes, tenderly picked up two young children from the midst of the hushed yet determined crowd, and climbing over the edge of the pitching ship, slipped into a small boat, the fragile craft tossing on the tenebrous seas below. Sliding silently out of sight, they were swiftly enveloped in the secret grey darkness of the night. I opened my mouth once again, the ache and the longing to speak, to shout out for my life, welled up from within the

deepest recesses of myself. I am in a merciless place. 'Take me, oh please take me. I must not be left here alone.'

The words were lost; whipped away in the wind, disappeared into the darkness. Whilst striving for a roar, less than a whisper emerged from my throat and I remained unheard. Struggling to move forwards, to reach the fast diminishing group of people, my legs felt as heavy as stone, welded to the floor of the ship, and seeming to resist my burning need to reach the possibility of safety, and of rescue. Nobody saw me: - heard me, touched me I had become invisible. Small groups of the shadowy grey people, men women and children gathered in huddles; in family groups, and then, quite abruptly, the boats were gone. Vanished into the murky night. All human life had evaporated, and the ship was abandoned, the people lost in the unilluminated and enormous ocean; a slip and a hiss and off to another place. The safe place. Away from this place. This was a forsaken place; a place that is empty and tender less; unforgiving and pitiless. I was alone.

Turning away from this stark desolation, my heart beating a desperate tattoo in my throat, the air pulled into my lungs with savage wheezing gasps, each breath being a fight for survival. I made my way reluctantly and slowly along the sighing, mourning deck. It seemed scarcely possible to keep my body upright in the struggle for balance and mobility. A line of obscure shapes loomed suddenly out at me from the gloom, and as I drew nearer, these became recognisable forms brushing against my face. An inhuman caress, cold and wet, like a cluster of frigid dead fingers touching my skin. A row of garments hanging on a rope and strung across a wide passageway. Lifeless, sodden and saturated with icy water, the forgotten clothes of the desperately fleeing people. Looking at the garments, I looked down at myself, and I saw my own nakedness. I was cold, cold to the centre of my bones, & to the furthest corners of my heart. I felt skinless; exposed and raw. As I grabbed desperately at something with which to cover myself, everything slid from my grasp. I was holding onto nothing-ness. My bones were soft, like jelly and my body were dwelling in nowhere-ness.

Paralysed & **H**opeless.

On and on I struggled, down, and further down, a stairway leading even deeper, seeming to penetrate a dense and suffocating atmosphere, the walls towering above me. I crawled endlessly along another unending passage until an open door drew me unwillingly into a room; the groaning of the ship receded until it was a dull and distant roar, although still insistent and terrible. In this room I sensed the aura of an unknown terror, I could not see the walls. The room seemed indeterminate in size and shape, it felt as if it too were pumping with my heartbeat and pulsating with the ship. Turning, unequivocally anxious to leave, I found the doorway occupied, my intended flight entirely and ominously obstructed.

No escape.

A tall man materialised, silently, as if from a dark mist, wearing a luminous white suit; the cloth as white as new and unexplored north country snow, his skin transparently pale and bloodless, like a grotesque winter slug. Lit by the light of an otherworldly moon, he stood in assertive silence, filling the doorway. The anaemic clammy sheen of his face was creased with lines, deeply scored into the startling white skin of his face and neck. He looked as if he had lain for a thousand years, crumpled in deep sleep; pallid as if he were the living dead, his cold watery eyes, chillingly impenetrable eyes, the living part of him, pierced my own, the intent behind the staring gaze impossible to decipher. His thin body appeared to be as hard as a stone, implying a sinewy mocking strength, and I felt a *knowing* that this man concealed within himself a covert and violent intent. A dormant desire to harm me.

An appalling encounter. A demonic authority.

Once more my mouth cracked opened, and I strained down into my stomach, wanting to cry out in terror. Once more my words sat inanimate upon my lips. I could not howl, I could not raise my voice. Struck dumb: - my mouth, my lips, and my tongue, rendered numb and impotent. Utterly alone and afraid, I sank to my knees, wanting to sob, and found this too was denied me. Even my cries were muffled. Helpless, I closed my eyes, and turned my heavy self to face the wall.

I give in. I am defeated. My whole body was struck with a fearful fever waiting for the inevitable. My hands were in pain, locked together, and despite the enormous effort to try ease them apart, I could not. My legs were throbbing, a dull ache seeping through my body. My eyes were seeing my hands: - my hands were gripping my legs, my legs were pulled up to my chin, I was as little as I could be; I was a tiny voice in a tiny body, wanting to disappear, like a tiny grain of dust. I did not want to be seen...in my mouth were the words I needed to say. Over and over I wanted to shout them.....

Its not my fault No No No Not my fault. NO No NO No No.'

My bed... My bed a tumble of damp sheets. I was awake; not in that dreadful place. Oh yes please... Awake! And yet, my throat and my jaw ached, tight with a torrent of unspoken words and cries, many unshed tears gathered hot behind my eye lids, my body was stiff with the exertion of trying to pull myself *inside* of myself. The image of the deadly pale man still hideously precise and unmistakably imprinted in my mind. I struggled to stay in the open, to stop myself slipping backwards, a downwards spiral into that awful iron hard, dark place.

Drifting into the lonely sleep of demonic dreams.

Dreams & Interpretations.

The sepulchral atmosphere of that dream took a long time to fade from my mind. The fear exists as a disturbing and menacing presence. The 'Slug Man,' a recurring abhorrent and unearthly image in my memory, upsets the lucidity of my well being in those moments that the image surfaces to become uppermost.

The sinking ship stands sometimes as a representation of fear, insecurity, helplessness and abandonment. A place of entrapment and suffocation. An omnipresent threat. My throat constricts as the image invades, inducing the sensations of being stifled or choked, It remains an occasional cruel presence in my conscious waking state, and as I drift into sleep, into unconsciousness, the image will often reappear, haunting my sleep, and invading unknown and uncharted dreams. The potent feelings of needing to shout, to scream, to voice my needs, a powerful reminder of the human necessity to vocalise, to express emotions.

To be heard.

In the contemplation of the 'Slug Man ' I realised I could interpret the dream in a multitude of ways. The sea became uncharted territory, was I afraid of change, of moving onto other paths? The intense physical resistance when faced with possibility of leaving the sinking ship. Back *down* to the known, however painful. Better the devil you know! Stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Common enough metaphor for life. The sensation of voiceless ness, of not standing up for myself was powerful. Not standing my ground; not speaking up, unable to protect myself, to ask for help, no sword with which to fight my aggressors, my voice withdrawn. And then the decent into the abyss: - the labyrinthine layers of the mind, the infiltration of the darkest corners, the deepest fears, the most horrific memories and feelings. Below decks and in the cellars. Running from the possibility of choice: - of change, of starting afresh, of saying what I really wanted to say!

A heart full of silent scream. A mouthful of unspoken words. I was left with the sensation of existing in an empty void and wanting us-ness, not only me-ness, not outside but inside.

The possibility of choice. Denial. Resistance.

A passive acceptance of what is.

Confrontation.

The dreams, or the nightmare, those unconscious experiences, have a constant effect on the spirit, or the soul, invading the conscious experience. Frequently, the image of the mouth wide open in a helpless silent scream, has surfaced in the worst of my dreams. This image has been explored and depicted by many artists, famously by Munch, in his painting. **The Scream**. The fact that the voice is the primary means of expression and connection with others, serves

as a dreadful and demonic allegiance to the terror of not being heard of not being understood, of being silenced or struck dumb. I understand through the powerful imagery of the dream state, the powerlessness of having no voice, of being unseen and unheard. This dream state, or unconsciousness, has revealed to me the true nature of the paralysing effects of being rendered mute and afraid to speak. The memory of those dreams filling the cracks in my wakeful world, create a place of hell upon earth. If you are not heard, not seen and connected with, you are entirely alone, without recourse to communication and discourse with human kind.

A place of alienation. A sense of isolation. No relationship with others.

In the dream state, all is possible. The shadow side of human nature manifested in the juxtaposition of opposites. In the dream, 'The Slug Man,' calamitous noise and silence sat side by side. Abandonment and entrapment the known and the unknown, the speakable and the unspeakable. Acceptance and denial. These all co exist in an unholy union, diving deeper and deeper down, down into the pit or the bottom of the underworld.... down into the darkest part of the soul. The dream state will lead you to the underbelly of your *self*. The freedom that the unconscious mind has access to, leads it to an unshackled and uninhibited travel, an entry onto a psychic battlefield. Here one lives out the inner world shaped by sensation, experience, fears and fantasies. The unconscious or the dream state.

The absolute and fantastic theatre of the inner mind.

Dream Songs

Exposing the mysterious wounds.

The impressions and recollections that dwell in my mind, the fragments and feelings, like snapshots from a parallel life, have proved a rich source of inspiration for some of my song writing and poetry. The images and sensations that remain in my memory as a result of the Slug Man Dream: - voiceless ness, the silent scream, being unexpressed, unable to move and alone, eventually found a place in a song entitled 'Howling '

Howling.

Verse. 1

Funny how time flies
 I am here are you surprised?
 Please don't come too near to me.
 I watch I see you leave; resist the need to touch your sleeve.
 My hands lie still I let you go.
 My mouth is moving don't hear a sound
 My body's holding me don't feel the ground
 I walk I talk life goes on.

Bridge.

But inside my skin
A million horny fingers pushing pulling at my mind.

Chorus.

Won't cry. Can't cry
Give me another life to lead I won't live this again.
I smile, meanwhile, don't worry about me
I'll while away an hour or two just howling at the moon.

verse.2.

The sky is not a pretty sky
sunlight beating on my eyes
Goodbye.... another wasted afternoon.
Inside I am the whole of me
In here I am alone
I scream I die ...no one knows.

Verse 3.

I need to close my eyes. I am here I am surprised. Please don't be too near to me. But inside my skin...

Another dream became a song called **Steps**, written almost word for word as the dream was revealed in the unconscious mind, and remembered on waking. The elements of the demonic aggressor and the inner voice in torment, were present, it is a recurring theme, although experienced within a different domain. Howling however, contained a single image from the Slug Man Dream, 'My mouth is moving. Don't hear a sound.'

The feelings of voiceless ness and of being disconnected from the rest of humanity, incorporated within a song that deviated from the dream story, the feelings distilled into that one line.

Steps however, was placed in the landscape that it had been dreamed in, broken glass, high walls and the sensation of a vast plain or steppe of walking to the very edge of my life. In the writing and the singing of the songs, I was able to lose some of the fear and *unsettledness* that I frequently experience. By literally *howling* the fears and exposing the tears in performance, I feel I have landed the monster, and it lies conquered before me.

Steps.

Verse 1

Let me come in said the face with the terrible grin,
 I'm on hot tin,
 I can't begin to cry.
 Why oh why? The sad girl cried
 Climbing through the frame to reach the other side.

Verse 2

She sighed and cried again beside the broken pane
 And behind a wall I'm not surprised at all.
 My voice is screaming on the inside
 I'm on my own desolation row you know.

Verse 3.

Collecting my thoughts from a hole in my head
 I wonder who is this underneath my bed.
 Are you the ghost with the most, my host for tonight?
 When do we ride and what's the price for leaving?

Chorus.

Let me sing my song for you.
 It's so hard to tell it
 Day by day by life
 And word by painful word.
 Let me sing it to you, do you have a moment for me please ... Do you?

Verse 4.

You are laughing at me
 Pointing fingers in me
 Regarding me inside with you bottomless eyes
 In which I see, absolutely nothing.
 Do you want to talk with me?
 Come quickly I'm falling.

Verse 5.

I'm walking towards the edge of the sky
 The air has held her breath.
 Hello stranger tell me, are you in danger too
 Tell me who are you and where do you come from?

Chorus. **L**et me sing my song for you..... “ 2

During a series of group voice workshops last year, I instigated some work with dreams. Using the mediums of poetry, free song, and rap, I encouraged the participants to write down a memorable and often experienced dream. An animated array of monstrous images and amusing encounters surfaced, arousing both tears and laughter. People, who felt that they did not have the imagination to

write a song or a poem, excavated the cornucopia that is our common dreaming land, and yet is so personal and unique to each individual. Dream archetypes appeared, recognition of that which terrifies and unnerves us...finding the voices to express the confrontations with fear and the tangled inner world, became a way in to finding the fierce voice, the angry voice, the animal voices and the shrieking big bird voices, and in the act, realising the diverse and multifarious voices within.

The exploration of the anarchic realm that exists in the dream world, through the creative acts of writing and singing, conjured a conduit towards a deeper understanding of suppressed emotion. By vocalising the images and feelings invoked by the dream songs, a broader spectrum of expression emerged. The animal kingdom sits side by side with the human in the dream world; the environment fantastic and ordinary, the visions unearthly and earthly, time suspended, emotions rotating sensuously and tumultuously, commotion and calmness, confrontation and avoidance, the whole fantastic theatre within the unconscious mind. Each individual could explore a known and yet submerged world, enacting a personal parade of characters.

Act 2 Scenes 2. Midsummer Night's Dream.

' Helena. (Awakening.)
 'Help me Lysander, Help me! Do thy best
 To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
 Ay me, for pity. What a dream was here?
 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
 Methought a serpent ate my heart away
 And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.' 3

Egypt's Might is Tumbled Down.
 Egypt's might is tumbled down
 Down a-down the deeps of thought;
 Greece is fallen and Troy Town.
 Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,
 Venice' pride is nought.
 But the dreams their children dreamed
 Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain.
 Shadowy as the shadows seemed
 Airy nothing as they deemed
 These remain. ' 4

2. The Extended Voice: aspects of Self.

Listen to me.

In the dreaming of voiceless ness, I resonate wholly with the desires of people who seek out what I will describe in this paper as Therapeutic Voicework. Many books, papers, workshops, etc. have offered insight into what is the fundamental communicator. In the human voice, unless one is born with a clinical voice disorder, lies the potential for a fully vocalised expression of our every mood or feeling. This work has been variously called; - The Healing Voice, Therapeutic Voicework, Find your own Voice ...Singing the Soul...Release your Voice... There is no doubt that to lose the power of vocal communication, to feel your voice to be withdrawn, is to experience a total sense of deprivation and frustration. To be unheard is to be cut off from human kind. To seek solace in solitude, to enjoy silent contemplation, is to be holding the power that your voice *is*. The freedom of how and when you exercise your voice is to enjoy being at one with your 'own authority. '

To feel empowered.

The emotions and the voice are intrinsically and entirely connected. The voice is contained within the vocal tract within body; the body is the reservoir for the resonance, the grain, the timbre, the width and the depth. The breath is the fuel, the oxygen, the nourishment and the energy for the production of the voice. The soul, the mind, the psyche, the absolute essence or heart and spirit of you, is the inspiration for how and what you vocalise, and what you *don't* vocalise. As inseparable as air is to life and water is to survival.

As human beings, we are wholly complex and variously tempered, and we articulate our emotions in as varied and different ways as we move our bodies. As diverse as our dreams and ideas, our desires and our aspirations. We use differing languages in order to express our immediate needs. Language can often be an inadequate barometer for the deepest feelings. It is beneath the surface of language, that authentic expression lies.

' The ' grain ' is that; the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; perhaps the letter, almost certainly significance.' 5

When we cry, typically the crying is brought about by the witnessing of suffering outside of ourselves, born out of compassion and empathy with others. A reported war; famine or flood, a lost child, a plane crash, fire, earthquake. All human tragedy.

' There but for the grace of God.'

In the act of weeping, our own unexpressed grief can surface; bringing an often-unexpected relief for our own suppressed emotions. We begin in sympathy with others and often find ourselves weeping for long held personal trauma of our own. Empathy holding the hand of personal pain, an event in the past, held in the complex and hermetic vaults of memory. Women, who have recently given birth...mother and infant vulnerable, will often find responses magnified, becoming extremely distressed by reports of infanticide or child abuse, reacting intensely to the worst possible scenario. The amplification of the deepest held

fears, and finding empathy and revulsion sitting side by side. The awesome responsibility of a new life, the tiny helpless infant in your hands.

In the seventh month of my daughter's life, a dreadful case of unremitting brutality and neglect inflicted on a baby of the same age as my daughter, resulting in her death, was reported widely in the media. I became obsessed with this baby. She crept into my dreams; the tiny face haunted me, haunted me both day and night. I kept a photograph, torn from a newspaper, and I fantasised about turning the clock back; changing time and place, rescuing her, and making her *my* baby. I looked at my own child and shook with horror at the dreadful thoughts that crowded my mind. Why that child and not *this* child. I could not speak of this to anybody; shame and fear had infested my body. I could not remove the images from my mind, and imagined the desperate and ignored crying of this child. One night, unable to sleep, I wrote a poem, a long and impassioned letter to this lost baby and her short, savage and compassionless life. Only in the act of creativity could I finally let go; not forget; I will never forget, but I allowed myself to accept and to return fully to my own daughter.

To be able to gaze at her breath taking, tiny, beautiful and vulnerable sleeping face, and to love her, I had to accept the cruelties of The catastrophic imperfections inherent in the human race, *had* to be accepted in order to understand that I was *not* to blame; to loosen the grip of my guilt and shame, to fall back from the fear of my own shadow, and my own dark and churning thoughts. Knowing that the innermost thoughts of harming my own child were in my hands, and my hands were safe. My daughter was safe. I had looked at the worst.

The learning for me, in the *writing down* of this experience, was to be found in the separation of unconscious and conscious, the dream state and the awake state. The acceptance of the shadows and the demons within, and also the significance of recognising and embracing the whole, the synthesis of all that lies in the psyche. *All* of this is me. By *imagining and terrifying* myself as the perpetrator of cruelty, I was not *being* an evil killer of babies. I was aware of the *possibility* and it was the *possibility* that so frightened and shamed me. The healing to be found in the creative act, in this case the writing down of the poem, in the crafting of the words, was the way through this difficult and distressing time in my mothering. Within this experience I had found a sort of solace.

The integration of my whole self, and the understanding of presence of the unconscious and the conscious life, the two working together to assist me in the comprehension of the process of acceptance. I wrote to give myself a voice, to bring about an awareness of my fears. In grieving for the lost child, I found the deep well of pain inside myself. It was only when I began to write this account of

the process, that I felt the possibility of a *beginning*, in the recognition of my own difficult childhood. By writing down my thoughts and speaking the unspeakable, I had in effect begun to see my own history, and to look at it, without hiding from its image, and the memories I had so successfully sought to bury.

It is within the realm of the furthest and innermost memory, that the unspeakable lies, Not only experience from the years pre narrative, but from the memories of harsh ordeals pushed down beyond reach, where one can pretend these events did not take place. Drawing a veil over it; or best forgotten, swept under the carpet, moving on.....no acknowledgement of a life lived, no opportunity to be heard, or to communicate how one felt. I have often lived as if my life did not begin until I gave birth to my first child 33 years ago, at the age of 22. 22 years denied. Denying or reinventing a history. In speaking the unspeakable, I sense that a human being can reclaim that past, and fully live in the present. The past will not, by its very substance, reoccur. It is *in* the past. And as I write this down, I realise that for many years, I felt as if the past would reappear if I admitted its existence. So the past sat simmering in my midst. Reading the work of people who have endured torture and oppression, I can see clearly the need to communicate, to voice the deepest pain and experience. To place this out there for witnessing and hearing, can be for many people, part of a healing process.

Back Beyond The Burnt Out Disfigured Day.

Back beyond the burnt out, disfigured day
I don't remember myself as young.
Unpardoned by yesterday
I look my shadow in the eyes.

I glide beyond the echo of past words
Into myself and deeper, as a ghost.
I follow with chill surprise
the shade of dreams I dreamed.

I go to myself as though to a friend,
a dagger behind my back.
And I have no strength, no anger
to come together with my own self.' 6

In watching a boxing or wrestling match, the audience baying for the 'kill' we witness competitive strength and violence being enacted for us, we are living the punches and kicks the, the battles gratuitously fought for us, the screams and yells of the audience adding to the theatre of brutality in combat. What thoughts are embodied deeply in the minds of those who revel in such entertainment? Where would that violence be executed outside of the controlled environment of the boxing ring or the football game? Sport as the new war. Where else can the roars of a blood lust exist as acceptable behaviour?

The Theatre of War is increasingly fought in a technical format, hand-to-hand fighting has made way for the super gun...the missile and the super jet. Computer battles. Where does the voice of rage and anger, violence and brutality sit? In facilitating a client to be able to voice anger or grief, to face the darkest memories and the dream demons and to sing it, is to bring forward a way of living with accepting that which has existed in a smouldering pot.... below decks...in the cellars. The emotions that sit and fester, and remain unspoken and unexpressed, can build a damn inside the body, and the shadow side of our nature, if unaccepted, and denied by us, will serve only to continue a life lived in *disease*... *discomfort*.... and fear. Waiting for the damn to burst.

'Everything with substance casts a shadow. The ego stands to the shadow as light to shade. This is the quality that makes us human. Much as we would like to deny it, we are imperfect. And perhaps it is in what we don't accept about ourselves-----our aggression and shame, our guilt and pain--- that we discover our Humanity.' 7

Bringing the voice into the centre of Therapeutic inquiry, allows the first line of communication, the voice, to exist in the broad spectrum of expressive art therapy, and gives opportunity, through accessing the full range of vocal timbre and expression, to the most authentic and most deeply rooted part of ourselves. This in depth voicework will engage in often hitherto unexpressed and dormant feelings, sometimes with a cathartic effect on the client. The results may be in the short term, both terrifying and unsettling. In the long term, with compassion and sensitivity, and a confident Practitioner, well grounded in the work, psychologically beneficial, and I am convinced, life changing. It is from the Voice Worker's empathy and relationship with the client, and the understanding of the creative process, that he/she will draw ideas to interpret and bring into the work. By accessing a positive and stimulating direction, in order to best serve the client, and his / her needs, a fruitful and creative arena can be established. It is therefore, of the utmost importance that any one wishing to work in such a way, first undergoes a close and thorough investigation of own self, in order not to project his/her own patterns of imagery and fantasy on to the client.

Therapeutic voice work is the fundamental key, to understanding the personal, and unique journey that we all embark on at birth. The adult voice holds the results of our early life, and the affects of the ways in which we were cared for as infants. Trauma, neglect, violence, experiences often deeply submerged, will manifest itself in the adult voice. Tightness, constriction, and in some cases, a shutting down of the full range of expression, in more extreme cases becoming mute. It is therefore, here at the earliest moments of our lives and throughout infancy and childhood, that the development of psychological and physiological vocalisation is formed. From the first cry at birth, to our dying

breath, the voice and the body together, are who we are: we laugh, shout, sigh, sing, speak, scream, babble, moan and mumble. The complex mind and unique physicality of each individual, combines to create the human race.

The investigation of self, informs me of the intricate and complex nature of the human psyche. By exploring my own complicated and labyrinthine personalities, I hope to more fully understand how best to facilitate work with others. Expanding the parameters of vocal tonality and pitch range, and the fluidity with which a client can voice his or her song, will produce in effect, a more comprehensive picture, thus allowing a free and unfettered song dance, and in doing so, will begin the realisation of a more complete and centred manifestation of the self. Voicing the deeply submerged feelings and memories will release intense rage, loss, grief and pain in many people. In developing vocal malleability, the client will access the physical ability to fully express her/ him self, wrapped & surrounded in the richness that is the human voice.

3. **The Body. Its Sensations and Emotions.**

Only.

**‘ Our senses cannot know,
They can only tell the brain.
The brain cannot know,
It can only interpret the senses. ’ 8**

My focus here, reflecting upon what are known commonly as *nightmares*, lies in the voicing of the somatic, *sōmatikos*, from the Greek; concerning the body. To vocalise that which lies within the memory, and is held in the calligraphy of the body’s unique map, in other words; physical and emotional memory, personal life history which manifests itself in the holding *onto of* emotions. Emotions induced by the state of being alive. All that is known to us as sensations and feelings; grief, loss, joy, love, hate, anger, passion, fear...all the emotions which make up a persona or whole person, both dark and light. In the same way that we *physically* hold tension in our bodies, tension that is induced by the *affects* of our emotional state, and our responses to the inter action between human beings, we hold onto the *memory* of those emotions, internalising the sensations that remembering *is*. History by definition is in the past, however the past *exists* in the memory, and is therefore also in the *now*, making the body the storehouse for our cognitive past and present. The consequences of which therefore necessitate the carrying of our history with us

and within us, unceasingly throughout our lifetime. To sing of what is unspeakable, proclaiming that which language alone cannot convey, is to bring to the surface that which lies in the muscles, the cells, the breath the blood and the heart of ourselves, the tastes, the smells the memories; all the material that constitutes a human life.

Voicing the integrated and consummate pallet of human expression.

**15. ' Intone a sound, as *a-u-m*, slowly.
As sound enters sound fullness, *so do you*.**

22. Consider any area of your present form as limitlessly spacious.' 9

Identifying the most basic and necessary actions needed to manifest the human voice, is to tap into the primary life force, without which, living would be impossible: - breath, movement, mind and body. Engaging with the essential senses of hearing and sensation, tapping into the vibrations of the voice as it hums around inside the body as energy and resonance, is in itself an act of self investigation, leading to a deeper and more informed physical and cognitive awareness. For many people, the initial work with breath, as the foundations are established in order to produce a strongly supported voice, and even before a vocalised sound is raised, is enough revive any dormant memories that inhabit the body, stirring and reactivating feelings and responses. To breathe deeply, engaging abdominal breath is a demanding and psychological process for many people, requiring a sensitive approach from the therapeutic voice practitioner.

Recently, while working with a group of people on a residential course entitled '**Rites of Passage.**' I decided to work with lullabies, as part of the first group voice session. Each participant had made a gift the previous day, a gift to the child they had been, the child within, and the intention was to post this gift to themselves. A parcel in the letterbox on their return home. I invited each person to *remember* a lullaby, either one that had they had sung to a child as a parent, or one that had been *received* as child from a parent, grandparent, guardian or care worker. The very nature of the lullaby, the memories that such songs invoke, has always provided fertile material to work with whenever I precipitate this theme. The fact that some people do *not* remember a lullaby, and yet find in

the memory a song that invokes the childhood experience, stands testament to the power of song; of music and melody. Universally, people can chart a lifetime with the memories of certain songs or pieces of music.

On this occasion I asked the group, 12 in number, to sing the chosen song softly, as if to ones self, initially in a circle, and then, to walk slowly around the studio. A gentle singing murmur emerged, and I was able to observe each individual as they worked. Following this introduction to the process, I invited the group to sub divide themselves into smaller groups of two or three. We then witnessed each group in turn singing the songs in these smaller groups: - singing as if in conversation, as a direct and vocal communication, as an improvisation and fusing of the songs, telling us, the spectators, a little of themselves in the process of weaving the lullabies around each other.

I observed one man, I will call him Ted, reacting to this work with a physicality that spoke of extreme discomfort and awkwardness, his shoulders hunched, drawing himself in, the body concave, his hands wringing together in front of his chest, his voice inaudible during the first part of the work, in the larger group, and singing in the smaller group with two other men, his song.... **Speed Bonny Boat** ...was vocalised in a voice that held apprehension and a sense of wariness and instability. Another participant, a woman whom I shall call Sally, sat against the wall, with her knees drawn up to her chest; her face tight with anxiety, silent for the duration of this section of the session. Her body set in taut resistance to the action-taking place.

Sally had told me prior to the session, that the thought of voice work terrified her, but that she wanted be part of the group and would endeavour to do as much as she could. Whilst the group were working together, during the first section, I took a moment to check in with Sally, and to make some physical and verbal contact with her. In the contact she became extremely tearful, but wanted to remain and witness the work. This she did, and I was aware for the duration of the session that she found the experience difficult and yet was drawn to witness it. She could not leave the room. In a session alone with her the following day, Sally spoke about her fear of singing, and as we explored her feelings she remembered how her mother had always silenced her children, 'Please be quiet. And do *not* sing. You sound dreadful.'

She remembered her Father seeming to withdraw his active affection for her when she was eight years old. How she had felt abandoned. In the laying out of some of her history, Sally was able to see how she had withdrawn her own voice, and also to see how much she would love to be able to retrieve her voice, *herself*, and to sing. She appeared to be heartened by the possibility of working towards this.

Ted had not thought about his chosen song, had no idea where it had emerged from, and had been profoundly shaken by the emotions that had surfaced in the singing of the song. Ted requested a one to one session, and disclosed the sexual abuse he had endured from his father, a doctor of medicine,

as a child. He had spent several years as an adult in one sort of therapy or another, and spoke in a fast and furious way, stumbling over his words, as if he had to tell his story quickly...as if he had no time. He spoke of a desk he had inherited on his Father's death, a desk that his father had inherited from his own father. Ted had hacked this desk to smithereens. I had a strong sensation as Ted told his story, of the father and his own father, the possibility of damage handed father to son and on Ted saw a way of *vocalising* his anger, of realising the dormant voices, in his words...

" I glanced back at my boyhood, and realised I had pushed it all down, pushed it away, I want my childhood back, I want to live life as an adult without all this fear and anger."

' Anger.

Anger, anger wanting to come out

Pulling, and pushing at your stomach,

In your head, round your heart.

How do you tell the others how you feel?

How do you tell the others how you feel?

Your anger needs to be free.

It's like a great ball of fire

Burning you up inside.

It can boil up and suddenly burst out.

You hit out you shout,,

You scream. People stop and look embarrassed or sad or

worried: and seeing their faces

the anger melts and dissolves.

leaving me empty and - better.' 10

By giving the *ingredients*, the lullabies, to the group for this session without prior warning, people had been given no time to *plan* or prepare, the lullaby coming to the forefront of the mind from a place of spontaneity; drawn from memory, acting on instinct from a place of truth and authenticity, leading to a personal and intimate experience. It is often, as in the case of Ted, one of the most potent ways of working with trauma and painful history. Ted said that he had not felt such physical recognition of his childhood trauma, in what he termed 'ordinary therapy.' He had felt a disturbing and familiar shudder running through his body as he sang the song.

Sally had felt that in witnessing the work with voice, and seeing and hearing the outcomes, she had taken the opportunity to glimpse possibility. These stories, encountered, as a result of working with the voice, are two of the countless stories that I have listened to over the many years that I have worked in this field. It is in the hearing and the witnessing of these stories and encounters that I felt drawn to working in a more informed and therapeutic way with the singing voice. It is in the provision of a container in which active creativity can take place, which participants can explore and respond to personal experience, finding a voice for all emotion, within a platform of artistic expression. Drawing from personal history, dreams and ideas, fantasies and imagination, memory and sensations.

Observing the physical language ingrained in individuals participating in any given group or one to one session, we can clearly see how we, as human beings can become a prisoner within our own body. In the exploration of the postural cycles, from infancy through to adulthood, and from the human to the animal stance, *Homo erectus* though the cycle and down into primate, lies a rich area of investigation. Loosening and letting go of muscular tension, which in turn holds captive the fully realised voice, and exploring the vocal timbre, in the search for authentic expression, the dormant *voices* can spring, propelled from the body like a cork from a bottle, and often discharged in a shocking and extraordinary way, The captive released. Here the imagination and memories of dream 'creatures' can come into play, providing a means in which to find a roar and scream. In the roaring, a client can trigger the memories and the images of why there has been a sense of *dis-* ease within the mind and body. In the roaring, comes the release of tension and the recognition of other sensations. The manifestation of the singing voice comes as a result of the engagement of the *whole* body connected with the *whole* mind in operation as one. To sing is to dance, and in the dance we can release the voice. The attainment of a harmonious balance of physicality, breath and voice will in turn instil a person with harmony and fulfilment.

' Balance- the human ability to hold the body erect and to move in space in that position - is the result of a series of muscular relationships and tensions within our organism, The more our movements become complex - when we take longer steps than usual or hold the head more forward or more backward than usual - the more our balance is threatened. A whole series of tensions is set up just to keep the body from falling.' 11

In most cases, the tightly held body, usually in tandem with a shallow breathing pattern, indicates a tense and rigidly held voice. A common area of tension is located in the neck and jaw area. A head thrust forward from the shoulders, the jaw clamped almost shut, lending the voice a trapped and strained tonality. Talking through clenched teeth. In assisting a client in the extrication of

long held tension, releasing the neck and jaw, and working with both the physical and the emotional *holding on*, a practitioner is enabling the client to release vocal power and fluidity, to enrich the timbre of the voice and to inhabit fully the potential to speak with a voice that is imbued with a more rounded and confident range of expression. Working with the body in the discharge of tension through voice, enables a client to verbalise a more fully integrated delivery of voice, giving it freedom and flight. Allowing the body to fully accommodate the voice is the route towards resonance and support. The affects of working with voice in a physical way, thus bringing the voice *into* the body, are dynamic, a multisensory activation of the somatic,

‘Affect.

Affect generally refers to that conscious subjective aspect of emotion. considered apart from bodily changes. In dance; affective and cognitive communication are intertwined.....

What is made sensorily perceptible in dance, such as anxiety and fear, is there by also made accessible to purposive action by individuals or groups. Dance may therefore function like play, exploratory behaviour, rituals of rebellion, or cathartic outlets for deviance in which a segment of the psyche or world is represented in a non threatening manner in order to understand or cope with it.’ 12

I have a client, Pam, who when speaking, sounds exhausted, and as if tears are perpetually close to the surface. The vocal delivery is fairly high-pitched, breathy, and sounding as if the voice were strained, and the throat constricted. It is neither delivered from the falsetto or chest register, but held in the middle, in what is sometimes known as the pitch break, resulting in a speaking voice sounding as if it is pitched uncomfortably high. Literally *caught* in the throat. Her voice gives the impression of a tremulous and nervous disposition. She is tall, but holds herself in a slightly crouched posture, looking as if she might be taking up too much space. An attempt at making herself *smaller* in the world. During an early session, the 3rd, I encouraged the client to uncoil herself, to work the body into the voice. Pam looked confused, asking.....

‘Why? What has movement got to do with my singing voice?’

The resistance to working physically was strong, and I had to move slowly, and with extreme care. Pam will stop and discuss and question frequently, and my feelings in these moments are of a person fearful of too much exposure, eager to halt the process and question it. It was in my intervention, and suggestion that we engage more of the physicality, that progress began to take place.

Pam, began the physical work incorporating small movements, inhaling down into the lower lungs, aiming for calm and focused abdominal breath, and on

the exhalation singing each gesture that the body made: - a slow inclination of the head, moving the eyes to see another part of the room, flexing the fingers, stretching an arm, pointing a toe, and in this slower approach, Pam was able to build her body confidence, moving at her own pace. It was the work with the mouth and jaw, which precipitated the biggest shift in her vocal delivery. In the separation of head and body, shifting away from the continuous questioning of the reasons or methods, Pam allowed herself physical sensations and feelings, beginning to act in response to her emotions and sensations, singing what she felt.

In the softening of muscle tension, Pam found a more centred and malleable voice. In the process of the physical work, she found that she had forgotten why she clenched her Jaw, remembering her Mother's voice, in what the client termed a "high pitched nasal whine," Pam recalled the ridicule she had received from her Mother when she was overheard singing as a child. Pam recalled the fear of singing at school, and how she had mimed her way through singing lessons. Singing in falsetto, Pam began to enjoy the notes in the sky, as I described them, to hear them as her adult self. The work for Pam is to learn to love her voice, and to lose the critic on her back. Pam had said repeatedly that she wanted to develop a low-pitched voice, and it was a struggle to engage her in the falsetto register. This she said made her sound weak and 'passive.' She had always struggled to pitch her voice lower, wanting to sound strong and sensual.

A common response from some people, when moving from the modal register up into falsetto, is to react with trepidation, and in some cases negativity. Women have often expressed dissatisfaction with the higher pitched notes, sung in the head voice, claiming, as in Pam's case, that they sound weak, passive, and or, childish. Men will frequently claim that they sound feminine or shrill, and will resist this part of the vocal range. In the exploration of these responses, amplifying the shrillness or the childlike sounds, clients frequently uncover aspects of themselves that they have suppressed, finding tenderness in the so called 'femine voice,' lost memories surfacing in the child voice. It is in the exploration and voicing of the timbre; the grain and the expression that the complex expressive self can emerge.

My image on occasions has been of people undergoing vocal vertigo, fear of the high notes.

Pam realised that the tension she had held in the neck and the jaw was old; so old it had become habitual, something she simply lived with. She had held, for many years, a negative association with high pitch and nasality. Pam's vocal pitch range extended to an octave below Mid C. yet because of the extreme tension held in her body, found it difficult to sink the voice comfortably down into the lower body. A voice indeed trapped between registers, moving neither up nor down. In working with abdominal breath and the widening of the vocal tract, Pam

was gradually able to open out her voice and access the deeper darker tones inherent in her voice, thus facilitating a more supported speaking voice.

Reflecting on the people with whom I have worked with, both in a group setting and in one to one sessions, I am struck by the many who come to voice work not knowing how it will affect them. The initial desire to perhaps *learn* to sing, to build confidence, and in many cases to find a way into relationship with others, is superseded by deeper issues. Tears often surface, and sensations are experienced in the body as the struggle for vocal expression takes place. Intense breath work will trigger a multitude of emotions in those people who have set shallow breathing patterns and habitually avoid *inhabiting* the lower body. Moving into work with the expressive voice, such as anger, power and strength can unleash a barrage of previously unexpressed experience. The simple act of raising a loud and strident voice is for some, a mammoth task. Locked behind the barriers of inhibition, fear and low self esteem, and manifested in an immobile and stiffly held body and a voice inferring only a fraction of the expressive potential that we all hold.

Recognising that which has impeded a full vocal delivery can be a traumatic experience, and the vocalising of that history, a difficult and shattering one. The outcome, if the process is compassionately guided, can assist in the understanding of the truth behind any long held pain and inability to exist in the world as a fully realised and whole human being. Hiding from the truth; denying the past, avoiding intimacy and thus evading communication on a deeper level, all serves to further compound the living pain.

‘ The truth about our childhood is stored up in your body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present its bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth. ‘ 13

4. The Performer. Catharsis through song.

Come in From the Cold.

Joni Mitchell.

**‘I am not some stone commission
Like some statue in a park.
I am flesh and blood and vision
I am howling in the dark.’**

The Singing Voice is, and always has been, to my mind, the first and 'Supreme Instrument: Voice and rhythm, dance and song. There is no doubt whatsoever, that to sing, is to experience great joy, an invocation of the spirit, a heartfelt means of expression and fertile utterance for the heart and soul. If one is able to express deep and sorrowful lament, to roar with anger or vocalise a powerful passion, to wail and weep, to sing softly, and with tenderness, to sing of pleasure or pain, love and loss, is a compelling, and intoxicating sensation, and one which can be, without doubt, a healing balm to a troubled mind, a barometer of the human condition. Listening to Music is in itself, a way of relating and identifying with our fellow human beings. The listener and the musician together in the act of giving and receiving the music, the one needing the other. A circle. or sphere of sound. Singing with people, as in a choir, in church, or in a vocal group workshop, can be an uplifting and joyous invocation of human spirituality. To blend ones voice with others, to unleash and reveal an unrestricted and uninhibited singing voice is a wonderful gift.

Many people come to voice work initially, as a simple request for singing lessons.' I want to sing.' or ' I can't sing. Teach me to sing.' or 'I'd love to sing but I can't sing in tune.' or ' everybody tells me I sound awful.'

A yearning in so many people to find a way of singing for pleasure. As if it is some illusive gift or skill, granted to only a chosen few. At the other end of the spectrum are those who want to sing as way of life; to become professional singers. They may be already working as such, and feel they have not made a complete connection with their full potential, Wanting *perfection*, or perhaps suffering from voice strain or lack of power and projection, and searching for improvement

Arts and Community centres, colleges and halls, are full of people, desperate to 'learn' to sing. Young girls and increasing numbers of boys, dream of fame and fortune, the latest singing sensation. To be '*Up there*.' The world, it is assumed, will hang on your every utterance; you will be applauded and admired. The promise of another world in which you will be King or Queen. Who or what protects and contains such naked and often naive desire? What lies inside the inner world of the working singer? What drives the desires, and the ambitions of those who flock to classes & vocal workshops, year after year? I know of hundreds of aspiring professional singers who frequent the open microphone nights, those platforms for singers that have surfaced in cities world wide, not in search it would seem for the healing voice, but wanting fame and fortune and a life lived out in the glare of a very public spotlight. To get onto a stage; as many stages and as often as is possible, and to be noticed, is the crusade and the all-consuming desire. The need to sing for and in front of an audience, the hunger to be witnessed in the act of singing. This could indeed indicate an overpowering desire to be *listened to*.

The desire made public.

'I have something to say. Listen to me.' and 'Look at me. Listen to me.... *love me*.'

Love. In other words the very element that the performer is asking for, even demanding of an audience, every time he/she enters the performance space to sing in the spot light, is I feel, a major driving force. Ambition and the need for love, attention and adoration. These desires stem from the stuff of dreams and fantasies. To proclaim and parade the personal hopes, dreams and desires, and to bare ones soul in so exposed and public a manner, often stems from a deeply submerged and urgent need for love and recognition, the artist becoming addicted to and craving an audience,

It is of course crucial that a talent for performance, singing acting or dancing, is in place, although the fickle and fast turnover industry of pop music, music that targets a mainly pre teen and adolescent market, can often attract the young and ambitious, with a talent and desire for being a celebrity more prominent than a love of music or theatre, *fame* adulation and money being the primary incentive, the expertise and passion for the art as musician, actor or dancer low on the list of priorities. It is those who have had their moment of fame, the glittering prizes taken away when the brief moment in the spotlight is over and another face appears on every magazine cover.

The major Cities are an attraction for many aspiring young people, enticed from home towns and villages in search of fame and fortune, but in the process, had found no real voice, yet, if *lucky*, had been the willing puppet of an often charismatic and frequently ruthless entrepreneur, swiftly dropped when the fleeting interval of popularity was ended. For those people, a pitiful end to the dreams and fantasies, unless the hollow shell that was notoriety rather than a passion for the song or the dance can be filled with something composed of truth and substance.

It is well documented, that many of the vocal icons or *stars* of the late 19th and 20th centuries, were people frequently troubled, & typically, from impoverished and sometimes violent backgrounds. Lives with content and history that had caused torment and anguish, became amplified during a prolific career. Lived in the blare of public scrutiny, and often-cut short in less than natural circumstances. The performer becomes addicted to the life: - the endless round of public appearances, selling the show, the film, the book, the recording, in other words, selling the product. Themselves. Enigmatic & complex, many of these artists seemed to have drawn no comfort from the riches and adulation that fame

success & notoriety sent their way. The histories of drug addiction, alcohol abuse, serial broken relationships and emotional breakdowns, are familiar to the public.

In the chronicles myths and sagas of the singer's life, the juxtaposition of the public and the private life sits, the private life as conspicuous as the public performances and recordings. The gift of song distorted.

Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Maria Callas, Edith Piaf, Frank Sinatra, Bessie Smith. Patsy Clyne, Marie Lloyd, Jim Morrison, Tim Hardin, the list is endless.

'Anita O'Day. Still singing after all these years (more than 50 of them has been one of the great Jazz Singers and one of the great jazz drug abusers. Hard Hard Times (1981; with George Ellis.) " When I began working at the Starlight again, I'd loosened up a little. I began hanging out with all these characters at the bar. Pushers and users, not even musicians they were people who wanted to get to know me because they thought I had money. I decided there and then that John was a Cat who had interesting ideas. So I had two reasons for wanting to get to know him: 1. To talk music, 2. To find out what he used so he didn't have to drink. Because the GOOD ANITA was nagging at me to stop boozing before I got cirrhosis of the Liver. Here I was thirty five years old, the ex-wunderkind, drifting like a ship without a rudder. We were spending 12 hours a day looking for it and playing games. I couldn't guess how much we spent on cosmetics I'd never wear and sundries John would never use just so we could add, 'Oh yes, and hypodermic needles for my vitamin shots.'

Billie Holiday.

' I finished a set with "Strange Fruit." and headed, as usual, for the bathroom. I always do. When I sing it, it affects me so much I get sick. It takes all the strength out of me.'

Maria Callas.

' In the beginning I never suffered from stage fright, when you are young, you think you are owed the world, so I feared nothing. I couldn't have cared less. Now things are different. The audience's slightest reaction affects you. At times you feel enormous, bigger even the theatre. Then at other times, you feel, ashamed, and terrified. All you want to do is run away. Its hard, you know, being famous whilst at the same time retaining the humility of a little school girl.'

Debussy.

‘ The attraction of the virtuoso for the public is very like that of the circus for the crowd. There is always hope that something dangerous might happen.’

Lennon. (Dreamy and reflective.) ‘ I always was a rebel because of whatever sociological thing gave me a chip on the shoulder. But on the other hand, I want to be loved and accepted. That’s why I’m on stage, like a performing flea, it’s because I would like to belong. A part of me would like to be accepted by all facets of society, and not be this loud mouth, lunatic poet/ musician. But I cannot be what I am not. What the hell do you do? You want to belong but you don’t want to belong because you cannot belong.’

Lena Horne. Billy Strayhorn...

“ He was a great accompanist for me because he understood me and loved me,” said Horne. “ But he was also musically great for me; he had a trick of hearing the breath. When you sing, you need air, and he made a soft little bed right there to support the structure, so while you’re taking your breath, nobody knows. It takes an awful lot of sensitivity.”

Louis Armstrong. Satchmo.

‘ Still, he pushed himself, trying to impress other musicians, playing outrageous strings of high notes that would result in a bloodied lip and bring cheers from the crowd and accusations of vulgarity from the critics.....

.... His vocal inflections, including sighs and grunts that trail away from the actual words like shadows, are as expressive as his keening trumpet invention.’

Singing songs of the human condition: - roaring songs of rage and pain, songs of joy, the sad lament. A tender ballad or a lullaby, singers sing all of this and more. Identified in the eyes of the audience, with the moment of interaction.... existing between singer and his/her audience. Within the container of the Show, *The Star* is in full occupation of the performing persona. The invisible wall that exists between the audience and performer, serves as a thin layer of membrane; of tissue, seen and heard, but not touched, being detached from the spectators, giving an almost ethereal disembodied quality to the performers on the stage. As life but not in life.

‘ The aesthetic space. An over laying of spaces;

A space is created subjectively by the gaze of the spectators-witnesses present or imagined-inside a space, which already existed physically, in three dimensions. The latter is contemporaneous with the spectator; the former travels in time. The aesthetic space thus comes into being because the combined attention of a whole audience converges upon it; it attracts, centripetally, like a black hole. This force of attraction is aided by the very structure of theatres and the positioning of stages, which obliges the spectators all to look in the same

direction; and it is abetted by the simple presence of actors and spectators who connive in their acceptance of the theatrical codes and their participation in the celebration of the show. The 'theatre platforms 'time space; it exists as such and will retain its particular properties as long as spectators are present or implied.'

A singer has a platform from which he/she can touch the audience with emotions. A singer can be a weaver of spells. It is understandable, therefore, that singing for a living will frequently attract vulnerable, and in some cases extremely damaged human beings. This is a way to sing your soul song, to sing from the heart. To be witnessed in the act of doing so. Witness to the HOWL. In so many cases it may seem strange and contradictory that the very act of singing, so therapeutic an expression, so fundamental a way of communicating, should intensify the damage, ruining lives, not saving lives, but amplifying that which caused the pain, and in the end, it has destroyed them. What reverberates inside the mind to encourage in some cases, the monstrously self-destructive behaviour of the professional singer? What induces the emergence of such damaging characteristics, and threatening behaviour? Fame, attention, lack of privacy, or lack of fame & attention?

Listening to John Lennon screaming his heart out, singing his song, 'Mother,' is for me a perfect example of an audience responding, resonating and identifying with an artist's story. He sang his song passionately, painfully, and with an intense and furious anger, and as a listener, I find myself quivering in empathy to his words and the grain of his voice " yes I feel that, and you are singing my story too." The singer touching the audience, resulting in an emotional response, a recognition and identification. The singer singing songs of the human condition and touching the listener. Art as therapy.

Mother. John Lennon.

' Mother... You had me but I never had you.
I wanted you but you didn't want me.
So I got to tell you goodbye. Goodbye

Father you left me but I never left you
I needed you but you didn't need me.
So I just got to tell you goodbye, goodbye.

Children don't do what I have done
I couldn't walk and I tried to run
So I got to tell you goodbye goodbye

Mama don't go daddy come home.'

' There actually exists a self-sufficient spectator just as there exists a self-sufficient performer. There is no performance, however ugly or insignificant, which cannot find a spectator who autonomously bestows it with values and meanings which he himself has elaborated while watching it.' 24 According to 'result logic', the spectator sees a performer who is expressing feelings, ideas, thoughts actions. That is, the spectator sees a manifestation of an intention and a meaning. This expression is presented to the spectators in its totality: they are thus led to identify with what the actors are expressing with how they express it.' 25

Poured into a brief moment of time, at the most a couple of hours of performance, is the physical *act* of singing the songs, investing in that moment, all the accomplishments inherent in the exemplification of an artist at work, fusing the myriad sensations and emotions, that are embodied in the act of *being* a singer: - the skill, artistry, inspiration, imagination, expression, communication, stamina and resourcefulness uppermost, perceived by the audience as being being the brave one; the virtuoso and risk taker, exuding magnetism and confidence, smiling, effervescent, and in the eyes of the audience, a god or goddess, all powerful and in control of the stage. Sitting side by side with this performing persona, is the one who needs to be seen and to be worshipped.

Underneath, in the tenebrous innermost place, hidden and forgotten, lie the multifarious and more sinister characteristics. A tangled, insecure and elaborate psyche, in constant battle with the 'selves' that are within. The person who was a child; *before* fame, *before* adulthood, the person who was anonymous and unknown, perhaps desperate for attachment, and seeking a place or a platform for exhibition. An artist burning with the desire to share his/her passion. "See me, hear me. Love me." Inside dwell the judge and the critics, and the omnipresent fear of failure, fear of the withdrawal of love and attention. The artist and her/his most dreadful enemy. Within the mind's eye are the visions of a higher self and conversely a lower. Sinking back into the abyss that is NOT SEEN and NOT HEARD: - fallen from grace and become unpopular.

It is here, in the realms of the singer in both performances, on stage, and *off* stage, that the integration of the selves, or sub personalities must take precedence in order to best facilitate a fully integrated mind and body, and an understanding of what lies in the shadow, or the dark side of the personality. In order for transformation, a voice, articulating one aspect of the whole self, is only partly representative of the whole person. In many cases, the confident

performer, seemingly possessed of courage and fearlessness, seems in effect to have access to a limited articulation of the self. The audience and admirers mirror back only what they themselves want of that performer, singer. Behind the scenes, attempts to lead a complete and fully functioning life can often seem impossible. It would seem as if the performer exists purely in the act of performance, living fully only when witnessed by the audience. It is the nourishment and energy for life. In order to cope with the stress of such constant and singular public exposure, many singers have resorted to narcotics, heavy alcohol consumption, serial relationships, living surrounding by an entourage who's only purpose is to collude and sustain this one dimensional existence. Mirroring back only what the performer wants, perpetuating the myth and surrounding themselves with those who support the image, who affirm, encourage, the public persona.

Expressive Art. Songs and Poems.

‘Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life.’ 26

The problem lies in the performer struggling to find a sense of sustained and informed integration of the whole self. To be able to put heart and soul into a performance, fully communicating with the audience, and also finding solace and peace, in the realisation that the persona has many functions, indeed many roles to play, To access a way of being separate from the very public self, and to learn how to distance those needs, to find peace in all aspects of life, in order to charge the energy, to invigorate the soul and to know the full meaning of self.

‘ And yet; when fear stopped her breath, the act of turning inward filled her lungs again. When she couldn’t stop the destruction in and of her family, she could show the shape it gave to all their lives. When she couldn’t answer “the question: whether to take her life,” she could still take up her brush and find “ my self, a name for myself.” ’ 27

I have often felt as if the client, when the work is going well, were awakening from a long sleep, stretching and breathing himself or herself into life as a fully communicating human being. All systems buzzing, and the voice radiant with energy and expression. Witnessing within the transference and counter-transference, *adds* to the acute sensations experienced by a client, when working with the voice within a therapeutic model, the client perhaps projecting a parent onto the practitioner, a parent with whom a difficult and even traumatic relationship might have taken place in the history of that client.

‘ The transference phenomenon is sufficiently strong to get itself expressed regardless of the gender of the therapist. While it is undoubtedly the case that at first a male therapist is more likely to draw a father transference and a female therapist a mother transference, eventually all the major relationships will get transferred onto the therapist, man or woman.’²⁸

“ I paint to give fear a face.” 29

Drawing together the ingredients of the imagination and the human voice, can offer a way of synthesising all that is in the essence of who we are, and in doing so, finding a way of facing and coming to terms with that which we have carried inside us throughout a lifetime, and have felt to be unresolved. I worked with a client, Jack, a man in his early 50’s, in a group session leading to a performance piece from each participant. Jack had lost his father when he was about 6 years old, and felt that he had never got to know him, and therefore had never said goodbye.

The Family Myths had depicted his father as a man, broken by his experiences during the second world war, coming home after being de-mobbed from the army, ‘a shadow of the man he had been pre war.’ His father had worked as a cobbler in the tiny Yorkshire village in which Jack had grown up. Jack had married and had a son of his own, but when that marriage had broken down, had been estranged from his son, who was at the time, less than 5 years of age. His wife moved south and discouraged contact when she eventually remarried. As the son reached maturity, he retraced his roots, and father and son were reunited. Jack had tortured himself over the years with what he perceived to be his absolute failure as a father. He felt that he known no father and had been no father. In his middle age, the chickens had come home to roost.

Jack built a cobblers shop, using cardboard boxes, and he made a papier mâché puppet; a cobbler. He found a hammer and several pairs of shoes; made a lantern from wire and tissue paper, and bought an old Army cap in a junk shop. He wanted to fuse all the elements of who he imagined his father had been, and to find a way of *seeing* him and saying his farewells. He wanted to perform a personal ritual in memory of his father. When thinking of his father previously, he always came face to face with the image of his son, feeling as if he were not entitled to dwell on the *missing* of his own father. In doing so, Jack became guilty and confused. Together we found a song, Jack said he could not sing well, and appeared nervous about singing as part of his presentation. A poem, chosen together from a book I had with me, became a starting point.

Parent to Children.

**' When you grow up, are no more children,
Nor am I then your parent;
The day of settlement falls.**

**'Parent', mortalities reminder,
In each son's mouth or daughter's
A word of shame and rage.**

**I who begot you, ask no pardon of you;
Nor may the soldier ask
Pardon of the strewn dead.
The procreative act was blind;
It was not you I sired then ----
For who sires friends as you are mine now?**

**In fear begotten I begot in fear,
Would you have had me cast fear out
So that you should not be?'**

The poem became the song, first in speech, and then, gently exaggerating the prosody, emphasising each word and indulging in the sound and the taste of the words, looking for truth and connection, Jack began to compose his melody. The poem became the focus and thus an outlet for Jack's story. In guiding Jack into an artistic and creative exploration of both the son and the father in himself, drawing on his dreams and memories, he was able to give voice to a lifetime of stored grief and anger. By utilising the poem, and not a known song, Jack was able to create his own melody and carve his own piece of theatre. We worked using this as a stepping off point, activating and repossessing his father, and the child and the father in himself. By retrieving his memories and daring to sing them, daring to put the words in his mouth, Jack found a means of recovering those lost parts and pulling himself in from the cold, from a place of alienation infused with guilt and shame.

Jack sat on a stool, an army hat upon his head, surrounded by shoes, tools and cardboard, his cobbler puppet sitting on his lap, looking like a ventriloquist with a dummy, and he sang his song, The lantern was lit beside him and the studio in darkness. On the completion of the song for his father, Jack gently blew out his candle lit lantern, and on a cue another brighter light was lit, and the puppet looked to me like the son of the son, and Jack was cradling his own child. As I write this account of Jack and his struggle I feel my eyes filling with tears, and I hear Jack's trembling voice as he so bravely faced what had most feared in his history.

‘ In a word, we believe there are living powers in what is called poetry, and that a picture of a crime presented in the right stage conditions is something infinitely more dangerous to the mind than if the same crime were committed in life.....

..... For all this magnetism, all this poetry, all these immediately bewitching means would be to no avail if they did not put the mind bodily on the track of something, if true theatre could not give us the sense of a creation where we are in possession of only one of its facets, while its completion exists on other levels.

And it makes no difference whether these other levels are really conquered by the mind, that is to say our intellect, for this curtails them, a pointless and meaningless act. What matters is that our sensibility is put into a deeper, subtler state of perception by assured means, the very object of magic and ritual, of which theatre is only a reflection.’ 31

EYELASHES STING WITH TEARS

**‘ Eye lashes sting with tears as a sob wells up in the chest,
I sense the storm is imminent but I am not afraid.
Someone wonderful hurries me to forget something,
I feel I’m being smothered
yet I want to live to the point of dying.**

**At the first sound I rise from the bunks,
looking around me with wild and sleepy eyes,
thus a prisoner in a rough coat sings a convict song
as a strip of dawn rises over the labour camp.’ 32**

The Voice: Improvisation and Masks.

‘ When we think about the mask, our mind jumps automatically to its natural context carnival. The Carnival feast exists everywhere, in every time and place. At the origin of all these carnivals there is invariably the celebration of an ancient rite, a mixture of magic and religion....’

Taking the use of masks into the work with voice, can serve as a way of being outside of the state of so called *normal* being, allowing the mask to assist in the sourcing of other voices, other personae. It is *your* voice that is soaring as a soprano, *your* voice that growls like a bear. When preparing to perform, the ritual of preparation, costume and make up, are in fact the mask, the devise that gets you *up* there in front of the audience, and assists in the sourcing of the persona that is the performer. To find the clown inside; the victim, the hunter and the hunted, is to give vocal expression to unexpressed parts of you. We are all of these characters. Bringing these creative devices into the arena of Therapeutic Voice Work, introduces multifarious palates of possibility. Within the realms of creative invention, improvisation and in the amplification and expansion of who

and how we are, sits the richness and diversity that is the human being, exemplified in the physical and vocal expression of ourselves.

The wearing of masks, like the singing of dream characters, will serve as a vehicle for the expression of hitherto unsung sounds. Behind a mask one can strut and simper; sing like an opera diva, growl like a bear. I have always loved the work of the photographer Helen Levitt, 34 and in her book, *A Way Of Seeing. Photographs of New York. 1940's.* The photograph on page 8, of three small children wearing masks, pose and exist in away that makes me want to know...who is that small boy in the foreground? Does he inhabit his father? A policeman? Some figure of authority and adulthood? Certainly his assured yet nonchalant posture suggests he is something outside of the small boy in Harlem. 'I am'. He seems to be saying. 'Tough. I *am* in charge. Look at me.'

The girl behind him appears less assured, but implies with her body language, (she seems to be facing the camera,) the possibility of an emerging persona, a character about to *step* out. The third child, up on the step, is still connected to the child behind the mask. Is she taking it off? Putting it on? Does she feel uncomfortable? Can she let go? Children playing and *being* other aspects of themselves.

It is within the realm of improvisation that much of the discovery and unmasking of hitherto unrealised selves can take place. It is in the uncharted territory of free vocalisation that one can find the *I* in authentic communication with the *you*. However, for many people, it can seem a very dangerous and seemingly unsupported route into the realisation of the singing voice, and an area that they will often find unacceptable in the early sessions. For those who fear what could be perceived as the difficulties of singing without structure or form, linking this free song or improvisation to image and the body has proved an invaluable resource for guiding clients into this way of vocalising.

I have on many occasions used the image of the spine as a river, asking the client to *sing* the spinal river, *imagining* the journey, as the voice, moving downwards in pitch from the head voice, or falsetto register, into modal or chest register, sings its way through the body, investigating the tributaries as it slides sinuously, snaking its way downstream. Down- spine. I ask the client to sing as far as he/she can on one breath, and to deviate from the main river, exploring the tributaries and investigating the banks. As each new breath is inhaled, the client returns to the main river, slowly exhaling as the continuing the vocal journey, with the little excursions as deviations from the main route. In playing with the voice in this way, the client is beginning the process of improvisation, each trip along a tributary being a small song, unearthed from within the clients themselves. The early stages of a voice journey, with the river, or body in place as a place of refuge and focus. Somewhere safe to return to. Roots.... Source. Improvisation in connection with the body.

Miles Davis.

‘ I didn’t write out the music for Kind of Blue, but brought in sketches for what everybody was supposed to play because I wanted a lot of spontaneity in the playing.’³⁵

‘ At its best, free improvisation celebrated a set of informal, even loving, relationships which can be experienced by everyone present, and brings into existence, at least for the duration of the performance, a society who's closest political analogy is with anarchism----- anarchism, that is, in the real rather than in the journalistic meaning of the word..... ‘³⁶

As a singer, I have worked, for many years in the field of jazz, a music which has at its roots a strong connection with improvisation, both in the way a jazz singer will bend and reinterpret classic Jazz repertoire and also as an improviser, working from a totally blank canvas, sharing with other musicians on those occasions, the starting point of silence. This work has afforded me insight into how we must listen and communicate on a very deep level in order to create a piece of work that is authentic and creatively and emotionally satisfying for the listener and the musician. The musician must be alert and attuned to subtle and lightening shifts in mood and energy, engaging in the process in an honest and receptive way. To support and be supported. This demands an immense level of trust between the musical collaborators, and one must be absolutely present. I have often felt during an entirely improvised performance, like a clay pot filled to the brim with water; sometimes empty, and then half full, and at other times overflowing. I have learnt when to be silent, not to force something out of myself, filling silence for the sake of it, but to attempt to keep all senses open, and to respond as spontaneously and truthfully as I can. It is not always possible. I have to look failure in the eye.

It is possible to subvert the whole process of improvisation; one can so easily control the outcome by simply relying on old patterns; a musician relying on the musical clichés. This will serve to cover and secrete the unrehearsed expression lying in wait below the surface. The sub personalities operating ‘underneath’ will facilitate the tried and tested, and in doing so will obscure and conceal, inhibiting a free flow of vocal disclosure; a reliable form of protection. For the non-practising musician/singer, this blocking of the vocal flow can

manifest itself in fear, and a refusal to work with anything other than a known structure.

However, someone such as myself who has sung for my living for a long time, and has had years in which to build an armoury of delaying or blocking tactics, not unlike a box full of tricks, can effortlessly find a familiar road to duck down, bringing out an old trick or two. Who will know? Verbally masking the whole story, thus evading the more fully expressive representation of the state of mind. This I feel enables me in beginning to understand the distress inherent in the lives of many professional singers, artists skilled in the art of subterfuge, constantly presenting only a one-dimensional aspect of the persona. The masquerade.

The ultimate goal is the characterisation, and closest expression of 'I Feel.' outing that which has crippled the articulation of disturbing and harrowing experience, and enabling the client in the comprehension of both the personal and the common human condition. A client whom I shall call Rosa, working with me over a period of a week in a residential group situation, was clearly seen to be struggling during the first voice session. The breath work precipitated tears, and during a vocal improvisation during the same session, her voice indicated a barely concealed distress, sounding tremulous and holding a mild and constricted disruption when she sang with any volume. Loud, vociferous and angry bursts of voice erupted intermittently from her, reverberating around the room, her body obviously holding extreme tension, particularly her shoulders and neck, her back set in a rounded concave position. Rosa disclosed to the group on this first gathering, the sexual abuse she had endured as a child, perpetrated by her father, and how as a young student, she was now 37 years of age, she had been raped by another student who had offered to accompany her back to her lodgings after a party,

As the week unfolded, Rosa would spend a major part of the voice sessions wailing or whimpering, and exhibiting an urgent need to vocalise the trauma she had disclosed. On two occasions she spent an hour with me working on a one to one basis, although this had not been part of the brief when I had been employed to work with this particular group. The week had been advertised as a healing holiday on a Greek Island, with the emphasis being on the healing and health giving aspects of Reiki, singing and bodywork, and incorporating one or two organised outings to places of great beauty on the island. I was one of three workshop facilitators, and it was the first time I had participated in such a gathering. The group was made up of 15 adults and 5 children. From the onset, Rosa appeared to crave and demand a lot of attention.

On one occasion the group leader, a Psychotherapist and Reiki Master, had organised a trip to a ruined church, located on the top of a high hill, and deep in

the interior of the island on which we were staying. A place that lent itself both to contemplation and singing. It was indeed a beautiful setting, although steeped in a violent history. Faded frescoes were still visible on the walls; a crumbling font stood in an archway, and birds wheeled in and out of the ruin, the roof being open to the deep blue sky above. It was hot, the air humming with bees, and heavy with the scent of Rosemary and Pine. The climb to the top of the hill was a struggle for some, but the view on the summit spectacular, the whole island spread out below us. In the cool shade of the church, I led the group in singing the songs I had taught them, and at one point mentioned that I felt a sense of ancient christenings, and that I could feel the presence of generations of families standing in this ancient dusty place.

Birth and death.

To conclude our singing, I suggested we establish a drone, to breathe and sing together providing a foundation from which each person could vocalise whatever came to him or her as we worked our way in turn around the circle. Rosa, her head bowed sobbed throughout the entire proceedings. Standing next to me, and the last in the circle to sing, a woman, Claire, tears pouring down her face as each participant sang. Eventually burst forth, crying out for her Mother, crying and screaming her mother's name. She sang and cried for several minutes, most of the group keeping the drone going underneath her as she sang/wailed. I felt the grip on my hand tighten as Claire sang, and as she began to buckle at the knees, I supported her in my arms.

The situation became clear as we talked as a group after this hill top experience. Claire had lost her mother only 3 months after her birth, and she had been raised, at first, by her father and grand - parents, and then, by father and stepmother following her father's remarriage when she was 4 years old. Throughout her childhood, which she said had been a happy one, and on a shelf in her bedroom, had been a photo of Claire as a tiny baby, taken at her christening in Melbourne Australia, cradled in her mother's arms, and at this moment, and for the first time in her life, Claire had felt the stored and submerged grief for her long lost Mother. In the ruined church; - on a hilltop, in a tiny village, on an island, far from her homeland in Australia. It was from within the free song that her catharsis erupted, not in the learnt songs, the harmony, melody or the words, but in the voicing of her own submerged memory in that ancient church.

From the improvised singing of her feelings.

Claire said that she found the tears had welled up from a place inside her, so profoundly deep a place, she was hardly aware of how and why. The triggers, she claimed, must have come in part from my reference to the christenings in this place. I felt that the vital ingredient of the human voice, set free in improvisation, and able to fully vocalise the innermost feelings, had served in that moment as the instrument for Claire's deeply submerged and long unarticulated grief. The

structured songs had been a joy to sing in such a place, but it was in the unfettered realms of free song that Claire's feelings emerged. Claire described her emotions after this encounter as being joyous and touched with a deep poignancy. We as group, felt profoundly moved in the witnessing of Claire's catharsis. Rosa became silent and withdrawn, and the following day, absorbed a major part of the voice and movement sessions, demanding attention from both myself, James the body worker, and Val, the group organiser. I felt as if Rosa were angry with me for giving my attention to Claire on the previous day.

As the week unfolded it became increasingly apparent that Rosa was desperately needy, and emotionally damaged. A child and an adult turn and turn about. I currently see Rosa as client on a regular basis, and she is working with the issues around the abuse, the rape and her intense need to articulate her feelings and to be seen. On the last session together, Rosa worked intensively with the physical configurations of convex and concave, singing the feelings as she moved from one to the other, singing through the bridge between the two physicality's. In concave she whimpers and cries, and as she shifts up into convex she shrieks and screams, using almost exclusively a whimpered or wailed sound. Ooooh and No, Rosa has been in one sort of therapy or another for many years, and is practised in the jargon and vernacular of one who has spent long hours in the pursuit of therapeutic healing. She also seems to me to be addicted to the cathartic release, returning to this point repeatedly.

It is my hope and ultimate aim that I may be able to assist Rosa in finding the artistic and creative outlets for the pain and anguish she feeds upon. It is as if she has carried the trauma around on her back, it is her calling card, her focus and her whole life. Rosa has *become* her abuse and her rape. In releasing this burden through the singing and the movement; literally *singing* it up; throwing it up and out, and in doing so, finding tangible, and consummate release, Rosa will ultimately unearth her *whole* self, and a way of living without carrying the heavy cargo upon her back. A way to sing her reason and her light, along side her madness and her shadows. A release, which so far has eluded her, as she lives, locked inside her trauma. By giving voice to her past, Rosa has the potential to give voice to the woman she is today, the woman who has survived, who goes to work, who walks and talks, who has relationships. Rosa in full communion with her past and her present, and thus able to be wholly in her future.

A client who is hesitant and troubled: a *whispering* woman, arrived yesterday with work we had set together after the last session.

She had painted, she had written; illuminating her text, the words. Pillow, Red, China, Broken, Hurt: all this emerged from her, in paint.. Image.... text ... words upon words, examination of why? What? and through these revelations. She sang, sang with a deeper understanding of how to articulate her heartfelt innermost emotions, singing red, singing china, and singing broken. Singing hurt, the pulling together of tangible truths, through artistic expression. She sang her painting, her words, and her feelings.

I have included in this writing some of the images that have spoken profoundly for me as I wrote the words; the pictures that perhaps say more for me than the text. It is here in the artistic expression of human kind that truth and healing lie, a sense of all human emotions being shared, the images that spark recognition, codifying and communicating a shared human experience, In the words of the poems and the songs; 'Mother'...'Come in from the Cold'...Poetry....'Back Beyond the Burnt out Disfigured day'....'From a Dialogue of Self and Soul.' To be able to vocalise what you *feel* is to tap into the life force; to the healing. It is the supreme medicine for a troubled soul. Art is life, and life is for all.

What lies within; underneath the voice speaks and sings,
Or is silent; not by choice, but by the inability to vocalise authentic feelings, rendered mute as a result of trauma, the experiences contained and gagged as though stifled within a mind in turmoil and a heart, heavy with a longing to speak, to communicate? It is in the exploration of self through creativity, through art and expression that the whole and truthful voice can be revealed. A voice that speaks of us and is us. A voice that sings our history and sings our present.

We have engaged the human voice as *the* channel for expression since we first walked this earth as human kind. Music has been the process through which our history has been handed down to us over thousands of years as: - ritual, ceremony, celebration, lullaby, parent to child, songs of war, of peace, songs of love and songs of oppression, and songs of pride and passion. We sing to give voice to feelings and emotions. Within the songs, lie artistry and necessity, social history and politics. Music accompanies language and articulates emotion, and the collective songs are a vast vault containing all that has been us, is us and will be us. To breathe is to be alive; in heartbeat; pulse and rhythm, a harmonious integration of the voice in the body.

Breath. Voice. Singing for life.

All names are changed.....