

Free Your Voice

Awaken
to Life
Through
Singing

Silvia Nakkach
and Valerie Carpenter



sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO

Sounds True, Inc.
Boulder, CO 80306

Copyright © 2012 Silvia Nakkach and Valerie Carpenter

Foreword © 2012 Mitchell L. Gaynor

Sounds True is a trademark of Sounds True, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the authors and publisher.

Published 2012

Cover by Shara Gardner

Book design by Rachael Murray

Illustrations © Shara Gardner

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nakkach, Silvia.

Free your voice : awaken to life through singing / by Silvia Nakkach and Valerie Carpenter.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-60407-800-8 — ISBN 978-1-60407-833-6

1. Singing—Instruction and study. 2. Music—Physiological aspects. 3. Music—Psychological aspects. 4. Yoga. I. Carpenter, Valerie. II. Title.

MT820.N296 2012

783—dc23

2012002370

Enhanced ebook ISBN: 978-1-60407-841-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Guided Audio Practices	xi
Foreword by Mitchell L. Gaynor, MD	xiii
Preface by Valerie Carpenter	xvii
Introduction: A Letter from Silvia.	xxi
Invocation	xxv
CHAPTER 1 Learning from the Birds.	1
My Secret Religion	2
Who Is Singing?	3
The Yoga of the Voice	5
How to Use This Book	6
CHAPTER 2 Music as Medicine: Why It's Good to Sing Every Day	11
Born to Sing	13
A Musical Path to Health.	14
Fountain of Youth	16
Fast Track to Relax.	19
Say Yes to NO	21
Multivitamin for the Brain	23
Take Your Ears to the Gym.	24
Singing to Change the Brain	27

Contents

Transforming Emotions.	31
Comfort in Community.	33
Warming Heart, Melting Mind	35
CHAPTER 3 Permission to Sing	37
Cultivating Familiarity	40
Building a Chanting Refuge.	41
Singing with a Drone	43
Dharana: The Flashlight of Attention.	46
The Teacher Within.	48
Your First Assignment: Banning Illegal Language	50
CHAPTER 4 Our Mystical Instrument	53
Musical Materialism	54
The Voice as a Musical Instrument	56
Care and Feeding of the Voice	58
Tone as a Spiritual Reality	60
CHAPTER 5 The Body of the Voice	63
The Four Corners of the Feet	64
The Singing Spine.	65
Inward Singing	68
The Wings of the Voice	70
The Belly	72
The Chest.	73
The Throat	76
The Head.	78
The Lips	80
CHAPTER 6 In the Beginning, There Was Nothing but Nada.	83
Sound: The Creator.	84
Outer, Inner, and Secret Sound	86
Nada Yoga: Voice as Energy	87
The Unstruck Sound	90

Resonance of a Spiritual Kind.	93	
Sound: The Transformer	95	
Shabda Yoga: Yoga of the Word	96	
Bija: Planting the Seed	98	
Voice as the Breath of God	99	
CHAPTER 7 The Yoga of the Voice:		
From Breath to Chant	101	
YOY Operating System.	102	
Read Me First!	103	
Breath	104	
Sound.	107	
Tone	110	
Seed Syllables.	113	
Invocation	118	
Vocal Meditation	120	
Mantra	124	
Prayer	126	
Chant.	129	
CHAPTER 8 Music à la Mode.		135
Sargam: A Musical Alphabet	136	
Melody: Horizontal Music	141	
In the Mood	144	
The Search for Meaning	149	
Harmony: Vertical Music.	151	
Rhythm: Measurable Music	155	
Duration	157	
Nature's Pulse	159	
Raga	161	
Rasa	165	
Cosmic Music: Medicine Melodies	168	
Spiritual Melodicism	171	
Back to the Forest	172	

Contents

CHAPTER 9 Designing Your Practice.	175
Staying on the Path	178
Points of Entry	180
Espressivo/Contemplativo	183
108 Strategies for Vocal Improvisation	185
Finale.	199
Acknowledgments.	201
Notes	205
Glossary	211
Resources.	221
About the Authors	229

Guided Audio Practices

Throughout the book, you will find guided audio practices that will help deepen your experience. Visit SoundsTrue.com/FreeYourVoice to download these practices.

1. Primordial Sound: <i>Hu</i>	2:56
2. A Drone for Your Practice	10:04
3. Create Your Own Drone	8:36
4. Singing to Disappear	4:25
5. <i>Ah</i> : Singing Breath	4:20
6. Inward Singing	4:21
7. Warming the Heart	3:24
8. Monastic Voice	4:29
9. Afro-Brazilian Chant: Focus on Articulation	1:54
10. Unbroken Sound	3:33
11. <i>Ananda Hari Om</i>	3:47
12. Brahm, the Creator	3:27
13. Bija Syllables	4:14
14. Sopra	2:01
15. Toning Practice	1:37
16. Elemental Seed Sounds	3:08
17. Tibetan Invocation to Green Tara	6:04
18. Yoruba Invocation to Orishá Oxalá	0:55
19. Hindu Invocation to the Divine Mother	1:42
20. Vocal Meditation Practice	3:26

21. Tibetan Mantra: <i>Om Mani Padme Hum</i>	3:09
22. Hindu Mantra: <i>Om Sree Amma Narayani Namastute</i> . .	4:57
23. Vedic Prayer for Peace and Well-being	2:18
24. <i>Icaro</i> : Peruvian Amazon Healing Song	3:41
25. Chant of Dedication: <i>Twameva Mata</i>	2:57
26. Modes: Using the Keyboard's White Notes	2:29
27. Modes: Starting on Middle C	2:18
28. Harmonic Humming Choir	3:06
29. Drum Language	2:50
30. High-Pitched One-Sound Invocation	1:40
31. Motorcycle Mouth	1:18
32. Chant for Peace: <i>Om Shanti Shanti Shanti</i>	1:13

Foreword

As an oncologist, I use sound and music therapy as part of my medical practice on a regular basis. For my patients, seeing a cancer specialist for the first time is one of the most stressful experiences of their lives. In new-patient consultations at Gaynor Integrative Oncology, traditional modalities such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery are reviewed along with blood tests, scans, and nutritional factors. I then offer patients the music therapy described in my book, *The Healing Power of Sound*. After a session, invariably patients tell me that they feel more relaxed and peaceful than they have ever felt before. In this way, on the most stressful day of a patient's life, he or she can also experience the greatest peace as well. How is this possible? The answer is combining sound, music, and chanting with a path of true self-discovery.

I have for years played Silvia Nakkach's music and chanting CDs over the office sound system for the benefit of my patients. I find her book *Free Your Voice* to be a delightful and enthralling read. It makes a significant contribution toward revitalizing the ancient paradigm of singing as a healing practice or yoga. Drawing on her vast and extraordinarily diverse musical experience, Silvia presents the individual's singing voice as an instrument of universal music, beyond any cultural divide and

transcending notions of personal skill. She integrates a range of different cultures into one coherent and fresh musical reality.

Singing is a divine gift. Silvia emphasizes that singing is a birthright for us all—not just those people we call “singers.” In fact, the most transformative kind of singing happens when we are not singing like singers, but offering song, chant, or sound as medicine and devotion. Everybody is invited to sing and join the universal choir: scientists, artists, healers, and teachers.

Reading this book is a joyful reminder that we are all born with a potent musical instrument: the voice. It has an organic impulse to explore and express, to refine and offer, to transcend and heal. The voice has the power to connect the body, the inner self, and the outer world. The voice can express words of power, and it has a unique potential to make music, relax the body, connect with inner peace, clear the mind—all while activating the pre-frontal part of the brain through its natural overtones and versatility.

Free Your Voice traces the power of the singing voice back to its most ancient roots as a devotional art and demonstrates its future as an integrative medicine that promotes relaxation and lessens fear and pain. It provides a deeper understanding of the musical form and structure that informs the voice, offering at the same time a therapeutic and spiritual experience. Each section of the book and the accompanying audio tracks illustrate how skillfully Silvia has assimilated the ancient wisdom teachings of sound, three decades of classical Indian singing, and a lifelong immersion in contemporary vocal improvisation. She has woven these threads of experience into an offering that is as enriching to the general reader as to the professional musician or the experienced healer.

We can now experience singing the same way that Silvia experiences her voice, as a liberating and liquid beauty. We have been invited to gather our voices in an affirmative connection to life and the joy of it. I foresee many readers coming back to these pages to re-read Silvia’s message, reaching as far

into the future as this book reaches into the ancient wisdom of the past.

Mitchell L. Gaynor, MD

President of Gaynor Integrative Oncology

Assistant Professor of Medicine at Weill-Cornell Medical College

Author of *The Healing Power of Sound: Recovery from Life-Threatening*

Illness Using Sound, Voice, and Music

Introduction

A LETTER FROM SILVIA

After working for countless years with an approach to the voice that is as innovative as it is ancient—an approach cultivated from direct experience; from the heart; from the birds in the sky; from my deep background in classical music; from my teachers who gave me the best training in the world; from the South, North, East, and West—I am so happy to share this experience with you, dear reader, in these pages.

This is not a book about “how to sing”—although if you choose to follow the path, your voice will naturally open in beauty, power, and freedom of expression. This book is a guide for discovering the potential of your own voice to unlock and cultivate creative and spiritual energy. It’s about building the bank account that will preserve the most precious capital you have: your emotional well-being.

I call the systematic approach to this discovery The Yoga of the Voice. Yoga is an integrative path toward our experience of liberation and bliss—just as yogic practices of breathing, meditation, or body postures (called *asanas* in Sanskrit) can bring freedom from a mundane, ego-centered state to an experience of divine inspired energy. A patient, disciplined practice of releasing your voice can lead you to

a higher spiritual dimension where creativity, connectedness, and communion abound.

Singing is a joyful, natural activity. Making music can be like flying—a liberating practice that frees us from conditioning, from ego, from karmic traces, from anything that tightens us up. So many people have the false idea that before they can engage in this joyful birthright, they need to learn how to read music or have musical training or be a “real” singer. When we listen to and do practices from the ancient cultures—the indigenous and shamanic cultures—we begin to understand that this idea is nonsense, a form of “musical materialism” in our culture that tells us we must consume more information, more training, more books, more CDs and gadgets before we are free to use our own natural voice.

It is much easier than that. The most important piece is to commit to the path of personal devotion—and then to sing. I intend to demystify the process of singing for you, as I have done for my students (some of them “trained” singers, others with little or no musical background, and many in between) for more than thirty years. From this demystification, I intend to lead you to engage with the subtle qualities of the voice, the true mysticism of music, breath, and sound.

These ideas are very ancient. If we go back to the origin of the word “singing,” it means to make an incantation, to enchant, to make magic. Making magic means inviting fantasy. When you become familiar with fantasy, with the way you use your imagination and intuition to engage higher states of being (where the materialistic realities do not lead), you are truly learning to sing. You are tuned to your own Discovery Channel . . . *it’s fantastic.*

We all have the capacity to connect with energy that liberates us and with energy that constrains us. We are made of vibration, and we have an unconditional potential inside of us to resonate with all kinds of vibrational fields. We are all born as pure beings, pure beauty. We just have to reconnect and reawaken

that purity, that space of no limitations where boundaries dissolve and spiritual freedom flourishes.

My way is through the voice, and the path is carefully designed with yoga-based practices that integrate subtle movements of breath, tone, music, and mind. I tell my students that the best way to free their voices from their bodies is to give them as an offering. In that spirit, I offer you this book. May it assist you in realizing your dreams of bliss and ecstatic union.

Silvia Nakkach

1

Learning from the Birds

*Birdsong brings relief
to my longing.*

RUMI, translated by Coleman Barks

The singing voice is a vehicle connecting us with the flow of life that gushes through our being at full force. The singing voice, through the media of breath and sound, supports the process of transforming energy patterns, creates measurable beneficial effects in the physical body, and influences consciousness more efficiently than any other form of sound. Like no other sound, the voice becomes a link with our spiritual life by revealing deeper aspects of the Self.

My primary intention in writing this book is to remind us that we are born wanting to sing and that at any stage of life we can benefit from singing more. Singing starts in the womb and continues blissfully throughout our lives—on the playground, at the ballpark, at political rallies, in the concert hall, in our morning worship. Unsolicited singing emerges as an organic impulse to express out loud our

membership in the universal community choir. We love it, and we long for more.

This book is based on the absolute belief that *everybody* can sing. In these pages, you will find a systematic method for freeing the voice to promote physical health and emotional well-being, encourage self-expression, cultivate artistry, and nurture happiness.

The media is buzzing lately with “new” discoveries of how sound, vibration, and music can benefit our health and well-being. These benefits, now recognized by science, have been intuitively known by the human species throughout history. We can learn about this from the ancients, as well as from many indigenous people living today. The fact is that each and every one of us carries with us, at all times, a most valuable instrument for healing: our own natural voice.

When you start opening your voice—whether in a hum, through sounding long tones, by improvising, or with a favorite song—it’s like a fountain and you can’t stop the flow. If you keep yourself “in the open” by vocalizing every day (or as often as you can), your voice becomes your protection, your Buddha mind, your fountain of wealth and health, a soothing balm, the precious child that you adore, your chosen mother.

With regular practice, vocalizing, singing, and chanting become an ordinary miracle that effortlessly guides you to a sense of self-confidence, compassion, and love supreme. Your savings account toward radiant health and spiritual liberation will grow fat and happy!

MY SECRET RELIGION

Since my early childhood, birds and their natural songs have inspired me. When I was small, I talked to the birds and they talked back to me. They became my secret religion. I would sit on the stairs of our weekend home and listen to their songs for hours.