

Unlocking the Power of Song A Companion for Challenging Times

Jill Rakusen



National Foundation for *Giving Voice*

Unlocking the Power of Song: a Companion for Challenging Times
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Part I

Tuning In to this Book

“Books. They are lined up on shelves or stacked on a table. There they are wrapped up in their jackets, lines of print on nicely bound paper. They look like such orderly, static things. Then you, the reader, come along. You open the book jacket, and it can be like opening the gates to an unknown city, or opening the lid of a treasure chest. You read the first word and you’re off on a journey of exploration and discovery.”

David Almond



Orientation

- **Take time on your own to tune in** to this Companion, at your own pace. Get to know it a little at a time.
- **This page will help you find your way around.** The book is divided into 4 main parts, though the chapter numbering continues throughout.
- **These introductory chapters – Part 1** – are designed to help with tuning in to what the book’s about, and what it offers.
- **‘The Way In to these songs’ – which introduces Part 2** – gives some initial guidance on how to approach the songs themselves, *whether or not you can read music*.
- **Part 3 is about the practicalities** – providing in-depth information on how to discover the songs’ power. The basics are set out in the first chapter – ‘The Four Key Elements’ (Chapter 9). Exploring them will give you a solid grounding, and possibly all you need.
- **Part 4 complements Part 3**, and is likely to prove useful sooner or later.
- **Do your best to set aside any assumptions** about how this extraordinary process might operate, where it might lead, and whether or not the songs need to be sung aloud.
- **Do treat the book with the care you would wish for yourself** or a loved one. It is, after all, your companion – and this could be the start of a beautiful friendship!
- **However be aware that** an entirely self-directed approach is not always enough. ‘Safety, Suitability and Support’ explores this issue (see Useful Links below).
- **If you have any questions right now**, check out ‘An Overview’ (Chapter 3), or Frequently Asked Questions.
- **Look out for the images shown opposite:** you will see them at various points in the book. They have their own story to tell – which you may wish to explore at some point (you can find out what they offer in ‘Visual Aids’). Initially, however, all that’s needed is to experience their shapes.

Useful Links:

An Overview [p 8](#)
 The Way In to these songs [p 22](#)
 The Four Key Elements [p 253](#)
 Safety, Suitability & Support [p 326](#)
 Trust [p 304](#)
 Visual Aids [p 329](#)
 Frequently Asked Questions [p 358](#)

Chapter 2

Who's this Book for?

Wherever you are on the spectrum of opportunity and challenge that life can throw at us, welcome!

Even if you have been blessed with good fortune, you will know that this can change rapidly and irrevocably – a fact of life brought into stark relief by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This book could be your life-long companion, whether you feel blessed or stressed or both, and whether song or singing are part of your life – or not. It's for helping build strength and resilience, growth in wisdom and compassion, and enabling you to develop a 'toolkit', which can be drawn on at any time.

Below are some examples of ways it could apply in your life. There's also an 'Index of Issues' on page 339.

It's for you if:

- You're up for discovering (more) about what you're capable of, your place in the world, even who you are; and the role of song in unlocking this potential.
- You need to find, and sustain, a resourceful and resilient way of living in this fast-changing, unstable and unpredictable 21st Century world.
- You want to cherish better – yourself, loved ones, the soil, the air, the entire planet.
- You're living with disability or illness (whether your own or a loved one's, whether temporarily, chronically or terminally), and you know how hard it can be to find buoyancy, let alone maintain it ... particularly in the face of exhaustion, dehumanising and even cruel policies and practices, and limited support, if any.

- Your circumstances are burdensome in other ways (as well or instead) – perhaps due to dysfunctional systems or relationships, structural inequality and racism, loss or bereavement, local, national, or global events.
- You want to contribute to the world in a harmonious way, yet find yourself easily despondent or angered by people, by circumstances, by what you're experiencing or witnessing.
- You feel cynical – whether about humanity, life, religion, politics.
- You feel some anxiety about the changes we're living through, and their current and future impact; stressed by busyness or isolation, or both; by relentless hardship, by oppressive, violent or thoughtless behaviour, and/or by self-destructive inclinations – perhaps fostered by social media, advertising, buried pain, or the 'fear of missing out'.
- Whatever's going on, you want to be more open to experiencing joy in life.

"Even in the darkest times, we have the right to expect some illumination."
Hannah Arendt

It's also for you whether:

- You believe you can't sing, or you know you can (with the *Giving Voice (GV) Process*, lack of singing experience or expertise can even be an advantage).
- You don't 'do' music, or you do, or you want to know (more) about what song can offer – whether you sing or not. (If, however, you're simply looking for some songs to sing, you've probably come to the wrong place!).

- You feel ambivalent or sceptical, courageous or cowardly, intrepid or timid, overwhelmed or fearful. There are stories here which touch on these universal aspects of human experience, and on the surprising shifts that engagement with song can effect.



Remember, the book is for use in private

Doing *GV* with even one other person takes a particular kind of skill (our teachers undertake rigorous and continuous training). While there are exceptions, sharing a song without such training is unlikely to facilitate unlocking its power. There could even be undesirable consequences. If you want to know more, please see 'Sharing Songs', or the Transformed-through-song Diagram.

Yet this book won't suit everyone – nothing does

Sometimes people explore the *GV Process* a little bit, then leave it. Sometimes they pick it up again, perhaps when life has become particularly tough; or when they've just understood something about it that eluded them before; or when they realise that the 'self' that dismissed it is not the self they want to nurture.

Equally, it's possible to be unclear about the nature of the process at first – as was the case for me when I was groping my way towards discovering it. However, through experiencing its benefits, initial expectations may get reassessed. People may return to it years afterwards –

"At first I hated the tape [my first recording – designed for private use] and gave it to Oxfam. Now, years later, I understand what it's about. I need to buy another!!" (shared amidst much laughter)

Alison

So, if you're about to set this book aside, do consider which version of 'you' might be in charge, and perhaps explore some people's

experiences about that, (in 'Awareness and the *GV Process*' for example). Do also check out Safety, Suitability & Support.

Challenging times

Untold numbers of people world-wide are grappling with diverse, deeply challenging circumstances, often unspoken, often alone. Many are dealing with injustice, for example, anger and/or heart-ache, with a lack of safety within or outside the home, with oppressive systems and attitudes, including the surreal and hostile nature of our 'welfare' system and the wider political landscape. Increasing numbers face the impact of unemployment, precarious employment, debt, and undermining, unsafe or exploitative workplace practices. Not having the wherewithal to fund basic needs impacts on everything, as does the actuality, or threat of, war. And underpinning all that is humanity's catastrophic impact on the planet (of which the pandemic is but one example), and the systemic changes that are urgently needed.

Finding a way of surviving everything – internally and externally – in a constructive way, that does not overwhelm or diminish us, or demonise others, is a significant challenge in itself.

I feel it's important to remember that we're capable of making remarkable changes when needed: we can find inspiration and support we never knew was possible, strength and compassion we never knew we had, and the capacity to see more clearly, listen more acutely, speak more powerfully and act more responsibly and effectively. Song has incredible potential to help us do all that. So if you'd like to unlock song's potential in any of these respects, this book is your trusty companion.

Useful Links:

Index of Issues [p 339](#)
 Frequently Asked Questions [p 358](#)
 Awareness & the *GV Process* [p 292](#)
 Safety, Suitability & Support [p 326](#)
 Sharing Songs [p 352](#)
 Transformed-through-song
 Diagram [p 330](#)
 Resources [p 367](#)

"We put surviving into our poems and into our songs ... We were pulled down so low we could hardly lift our eyes, so we knew, if we wanted to survive, we had better lift our own spirits ..."
James Baldwin[†]

* Other types of recording are now available – see Resources.

[†] Baldwin talking to Maya Angelou about surviving slavery and its legacy; quoted in Angelou's *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (Random House 2002).





Part 2

The Songs

“The songs are singing all the time. We’re just joining them for a while.”

Rachel

The Way In to these songs

“I found the song’s words, and the story behind it so helpful. Eventually, when I became aware of the song itself, and was eventually able to sing it, I already had this relationship to build on.”

Diane, talking about how her experience with *A Song about Finding Peace* (No. 1) developed

These songs are unusual – as described in the previous chapter. To unlock their power, we need to discover how to relate to them, and this initially requires some restraint. For this reason, it’s recommended that you follow the preparatory steps below; this will enable you to begin your explorations in the most productive way possible.

GET TO KNOW HOW TO CHOOSE – AND ENCOUNTER – A SONG

The step by step guidance in Chapter 9 gives you all the details; however, these basic guidelines provide an initial way in:

- **Remember this is a S L O W book.** There’s so much to gain through exploring in bite-sized pieces, long before either listening to a recording, or singing the song aloud. This is about experience and process, not performance.
- **Explore on your own** – without other people, background music etc., having carved out some time for this encounter.
- **Make yourself comfortable,** maybe give your body a gentle stretch, and allow yourself to breathe with increasing ease.
- **Take a gentle amble** through some of the songs’ words and stories, and who they are for. This will help you discover aspects of their nature and purpose.
- **Look at the written music – yes, whether or not you can read it!** (please see box opposite for hints on how to approach this).*
- **If you find yourself increasingly drawn** to a particular song, this marks the beginning of a relationship – even though you are yet to hear a single note.
- **However fleeting or subtle such an encounter,** acknowledging its significance will help you cherish this emerging relationship and the gifts it will bring. And it provides a firm foundation for the unlocking process.
- **You may feel prompted** to say some of the song’s words aloud at this point. Even if you’re a singer – and perhaps particularly if you are – this may prove an invaluable way in to the song, rather than attempting to sing it.
- **Each of these songs has something to offer you** – either now or in the future. If you are yet to feel drawn to a song, check out Chapter 9 for further guidance about choosing one.
- **Be prepared for an unfamiliar experience.**

* The written music involves just a single melodic line. This is all that’s needed for you to unlock the song’s power. Indeed, when we fully engage with these songs on our own, there’s just us – heart, soul and breath – coming together with the song’s words and melody. There’s no need for chords or harmonies to be provided (and they can sometimes be a distraction).

Reading and experiencing the written music (whether or not you know how to do this!)

The musical manuscript carries the song's essence. Regardless of whether you can read music, there is benefit from looking at it, however counterintuitive this might seem.

Take in the symbols. You might get a sense of the shape of the musical phrases – eg whether the dots go up or down. Caroline, who doesn't find it easy to read music, met one of the songs like this:

“As I took time to let my eyes soften and gaze at it, I felt I was meeting the song's ‘underlyingness’. It felt a bit like encountering written Chinese characters – that I don't understand, but which convey the essence of something. I was left with a very warm settledness in my heart. I felt I was honouring the song in an important way.”

Let go of doubts and any need to think about what you are doing.

APPROACH THIS AS AN ADVENTURE!

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice finds a tiny golden key, which opens a little door ahead of her. She sees “the loveliest garden you ever saw”, and longs to go there, but she's too big to even get her head through the door. Then she finds a bottle that says “Drink me”, which she does – then becoming small enough to go through the door.

However, when she gets there, she finds the door is locked again. Returning to the table where she left the key Alice is now unable to reach it. Then she sees a box with a cake saying “eat me” and, on following this instruction, she reaches the key. But she's still unable to go through the door as she's now too tall ... and so it goes. A strange new world.

Fortunately the *Giving Voice Process* is straightforward in comparison! However, it does require us, like Alice, to see things in a different way; and, if not to shape-shift, at least to let go of expectations and to be prepared for new ways of doing things. And to follow some guidance ...

This process may feel strange and unusual, and you might feel like ignoring all the preparation and skipping straight to a recording. However, trust me when I say that would be self-sabotage! There's method in this madness!

So,

- Breathe easily,
- Remember Alice,
- Accept the nature of Wonderland (perhaps free of the more bizarre aspects),
- Be patient,
- And trust that when you eventually open the door to the song's recording, you'll benefit hugely from preparing yourself beforehand.



If you can read music ... or not

If you have difficulty reading music, or can't read it at all, you may well be at an advantage. This is because you won't be able to fall into familiar patterns of responding to it, which can make it harder to unlock a song's power.

If you have no difficulty reading it, and perhaps can even hear it in your head: do your best to explore being with it, rather than how to master what it 'says', or seeing it as something to achieve, or to analyse or assess.

Wherever you sit in relation to the above, be open to being taken on a journey, (which could even be towards a different relationship with music); trust that you may encounter aspects of the song's essence, even unknowingly.

LISTENING TO – AND RECEIVING – THE SONG

If you have followed the above guidance, you're now ready to open the door to the next phase of a very special relationship, involving learning how to listen – and, above all, receive and absorb – the song. The possibilities inherent in this first aural encounter can never be repeated, so check out how to receive a song in Chapter 9 before you press that button!



Obtaining recordings

Each song's 'Useful Links' gives a unique web address, which takes you to the place on our website where recordings can be ordered or downloaded.

Follow the advice on the website to establish the best way for you personally to access and play a recording, and how you can set up your equipment (eg mobile phone, computer, CD player) with least chance of disturbance.

If you are unable to use the internet for any reason, please contact the Foundation for recordings directly (see Resources).

However you obtain recordings, do your best to avoid rushing to listen: as with exploring a song in this book, some preparation is needed. Chapter 9 shows how.

In fact, there may be an advantage if for any reason there is a short delay before a recording can be accessed. For instance,

- You could find a way of enjoying the wait – like you might enjoy the anticipation of getting to know someone with whom you've connected only briefly, and have yet to meet in person.
- You may realise too that you have a potentially significant part to play in getting this new relationship off to a good start. So often, delay can enhance our experience – as with many other aspects of life.

Useful Links:

Connecting with the Breath
p 271
Trust p 304
Understanding p 305
Choosing a song from this
book p 254
How we initially Receive the
Song p 256
Likes and Dislikes p 255
Resources p 367

*"I say: take no thought of the harvest,
But only of proper sowing."*

TS Eliot 'Choruses from the Rock' *Collected Poems*

Song 13 *Tallis's Canon*

I've always loved the beauty and craftsmanship of this 16th Century canon by Thomas Tallis. Yet I never felt entirely comfortable with the words usually associated with it.* Over the years, I've created several different sets of words. This version came in response to a deep need – despite my being barely aware of it initially: that the way I was starting my day involved an absence of something – a respect and reverence that was so often lacking. This is the version most commonly used in *Giving Voice*.

* The canon, (or 'round'), was one of a number of pieces that Tallis wrote for the (Protestant) Archbishop Matthew Parker's *The Whole Psalter*. It was originally set to words loosely linked with Psalm 67, although it seems unclear how far, if at all, Tallis was inspired by them. When writing this chapter, I discovered that numerous sets of words have been created over the centuries – all in the Protestant tradition; I've just added to the list from a slightly different perspective.

Song 13

Tallis's Canon

I thank thee for this sacred day

And all the gifts that come my way,

Help me to find the sacred key

In me and everyone I meet.

© Jill Rakusen
2003

HISTORY OF THIS SONG

I was confined to bed and feeling rather sorry for myself. Because of my 'incapacity', I'd had to let go of all my plans and wishes – a not uncommon scenario. As I lay there, I was ready to spiral down into the misery that can so easily dominate such a narrowed world. Yes, I thought I'd got the measure of my long-standing condition, but it could still take me by surprise!

Fortunately I was able to stop the spiralling, and became like a boat caught in the moments before it goes into reverse. And in a way, I did go into reverse. Tallis's music appeared just as I turned away from the

precipice of pain. What a gift! I revelled in it, opening my heart to it more and more. The sense of gratitude and the sacredness of each moment almost overwhelmed me. And at the same time, these new words appeared.

As I began to sing them, the residual alienation that comes from complacency fell away. My gratitude expanded – to include the roof over my head, the array of plants I'd created opposite my bed, the tiny glimpse of landscape between the buildings outside my bedroom window, the capacity to really experience all this, and so much more.

Do (re)visit p 23 for how to approach this written music.

I thank thee for this sa-cred day and all the gifts that
 come my way, help me to find the sa-cred key in
 me and ev-ry one I meet

Thomas Tallis*
 (c 1505-1585)

* So we can experience what the song can offer to its fullest extent, I have taken a liberty with the ending of Tallis's original tune: in my version, the final note is not immediately followed by the start of the next phrase, but instead allows time for us to breathe in fully and easily, while we revisit our relationship with the song before starting again. As the musically literate will realise, this does not interfere with the canon in any way.

The more I sang, the more connectedness, joy and gratitude I experienced. I felt blessed, and humbled. While I remained too ill to function except at a minimal level for several days, this was no longer the burden it had been, as reverence filled my consciousness.

Some years later, after my mother died, I was again deeply drawn to engage with Tallis's Canon. This time it prompted different words:

*O Welcome to this sacred day
 And all the gifts that come my way,
 Give thanks for life, Give thanks for death,
 For light and love and truthfulness.*

This version gave me much in the days before the funeral. It really helped me through what was a very tricky time. I 'tweaked' it slightly for others to sing at the funeral (if they wished)[†], and these words have occasionally been sung in *Giving Voice (GV)* settings too.

The contexts of these two versions may shed light on the possibilities they offer.

[†] We sang 'Give thanks for life with every breath ...' as I felt it was likely to be problematic for many of those attending to give thanks for death. I doubt however that my mother would have had a problem with it, despite being an atheist: being a passionate gardener, she was intimately attuned to the cycle of life and death.

SOME OTHERS' EXPERIENCES

Many have engaged with this song as part of an ongoing process – finding, as I did, that it has much to offer when sung with intention and willingness.

“I’ve found this song so up-lifting.”

Christine

“I don’t like this song ... but I’ve had some good experiences with it.”

Adrian

“This song really helps when I’m doing things that seem boring, demoralising or mundane. It makes me grateful for what I have and who I am.”

Deirdre

“One morning it enabled me to be in touch with the sacred, and to bridge the gap down which that awareness could easily have disappeared. The awareness informed a lot of my activities during the day, which unfolded beautifully. On another occasion, I experienced becoming open – as if opening a valve – and a cleansing (of myself as an instrument), creating clarity inside. I then felt part of an orchestra, a clean instrument, in tune, vibrating with beauty and my ears open to the others.”

Caroline

For the curious irrelevance of whether we like a song, check out ‘Likes and Dislikes’ in Chapter 9.

It can take us on quite a journey

Rachel shares aspects of her experience over time:

Initial discomfort

“Had I first encountered this song a few years before, I believe I would have hated it. Even though Jill’s version doesn’t include the word ‘God’, it would have brought up all the resentment and alienation I felt about Christianity. I would also have found the words irritating – appearing to ignore the reality of pain and suffering in the world and in me.

However, it affected me profoundly straight away.”

New discoveries through perceiving differently

“It’s increasingly enabled me to honour my own sacredness and wholeness, and to face more fully both the beauty and the pain within me. I have found a greater acceptance of others, through acknowledging that I am as capable of bigotry and violence as anyone. Resenting Christianity was a way of denying this in individuals, including myself.

The song helps me move away from my negative tendencies, offering me a wider perspective involving love and compassion. I now realise I have personal responsibility for addressing the pain I meet in myself and in others, rather than blaming religion or anything else for it.”

Occasions I engage with it

“I have connected with this song most often at the end of the day, and often sing it silently in bed. I’ve used it at New Year, to avoid negativity when reflecting on the previous one: it’s helped me look forward to the next one with joy, trust and gratitude. I’ve also used it when preparing to move house: it brought me in touch with gratitude for all I have, with being able to acknowledge that I need help, recognising it’s available, and asking for it!”

New Appreciation

“The song helps me appreciate the unique gifts each person has to offer. When I’m stressed or in pain it can release me by offering connection with a wider perspective, and it helps me see possibilities for love and support and change. It helps me recall and honour all the good experiences I have, and honour all the gifts I’ve been given. The gratitude has grown to fill me up more, through tending it.

Though I have a sense of the sacredness of all things, and feel gratitude, I frequently forget. This song brings me back to a place of honouring, back to the possibility of love, growth, support and harmony.

I’m so grateful for all I’ve been offered through the Tallis, and through Giving Voice. They’ve been such a source of support, as well as posing new challenges to my limited perceptions that have enabled me to find a wider perspective.”

Prompted by this song, Rachel talks about her relationship with spirituality:

“Through my GV training I’ve learnt that the nature of spirituality is that it embraces everything, it involves everything. It’s involved in the mind, the body and the emotions; it’s not just another component. GV cannot help but address everything, because it is so holistic.”

WHO MIGHT THE SONG BE FOR?

- **Anyone who wants to become more self-accepting**, regardless of circumstance.
- **When seeking ease, release, hope, healing.**
- **When appreciation and gratitude** need to be honoured.
- **When impatience, judgement or complacency threaten.**
- **When wishing to engage with others more productively.**
- **When an awareness of the sacred is sought.**

HANDY HINTS

- **Take a rest between each line** – perhaps imagine it being repeated. This allows time to breathe and to experience the quality of being that the line promotes. It’s also particularly helpful if feeling unwell.
- **Take heart and inspiration from** the fact that Tallis’s Canon has been sung for centuries, and has probably always carried a sense of the sacred in some way, despite myriad different words.*

Useful Links:

Reading and experiencing
the written music p 23
Connectedness p 294
Silent Singing p 270
Perspective p 314
Expanded Awareness p 9
Becoming Empowered p 320
Addressing Negativity p 312
<https://rebrand.ly/upos13o>

“Gratitude is the key to opening the door to transformation.”

Dr Zhi Gang Sha

* A potted history: Tallis’s life spanned turbulent times, after Henry VIII was creating such an upheaval in the established order of things, having broken with Rome. Subsequent monarchs did not necessarily create stability either. Tallis’s epitaph describes him as “one who avoided religious conflict”, and he was one of a number of musicians who managed to keep their heads (literally as well as metaphorically), while others didn’t.





Part 3

Unlocking the Power of Song – the Practicalities of the *Giving Voice Process*

*“We don’t create, we discover – and the process of
discovery gives you energy.”*

Ahmad Jamal, renowned jazz pianist

A brief introduction to the visual aids

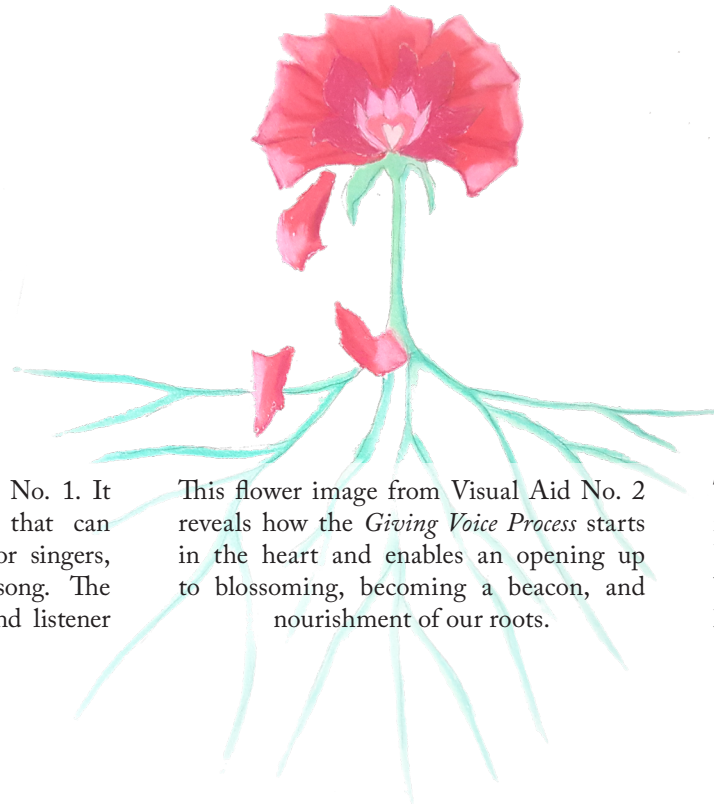
They are fully illustrated and explained on pp 329–338 and you will also see the images dotted around the text in places where they are particularly relevant

Transformed-through-song Diagram



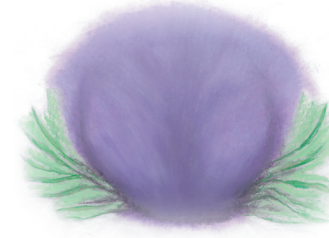
This symbol is from Visual Aid No. 1. It symbolises the transformation that can happen when, as listeners and/or singers, we unlock the power of a song. The colours represent song, singer and listener respectively.

Flower Diagram



This flower image from Visual Aid No. 2 reveals how the *Giving Voice Process* starts in the heart and enables an opening up to blossoming, becoming a beacon, and nourishment of our roots.

An All-fulfilling Relationship



This expansive model of ‘an all-fulfilling relationship’ with music (Model ‘A’ from Visual Aid No. 3) signifies the depth and breadth of where such a relationship can lead. The green bits symbolise growth shoots fertilised by awareness.

Orientation

“Experiencing it is the only way we can understand it.” course participant

If you’ve looked at a song or two in the previous section, you may well be ready to explore how to unlock their power. That’s what this whole Practicalities section is about. The process is undoubtedly unusual (you might well have realised this already). The best way to approach it is as an adventure.

Chapter 9 – the next chapter – is the place to start. It takes you through the ‘Four Key Elements’, providing all you need to begin discovering how to unlock the power of a song. In essence, it’s about how to establish a relationship with the song, and crucially, it doesn’t involve singing aloud. It’s carefully detailed to give you the best possible start. So be prepared, and do take your time.

The other chapters are for when, or if, the ‘Useful Links’ in Chapter 9 prompt you to explore further – Mode 1 of *Silent Singing* (Chapter 12), for instance, or Personal Practice (Chapter 13).

The Symbols Guide (overleaf) will also help clarify when it will be useful to delve into these other chapters – including when you might be ready to explore involving your voice. (To unlock the power of a song does not require us to sing, and it’s only in Chapter 11 that we begin to look at actually *Giving Voice*. This is because establishing our relationship with a song is so central – not only to the unlocking process, but also to *Giving Voice* to the song; both involve skill at an inner level).

A word about Part 4: however far you explore Part 3, do occasionally check out Part 4: it interrelates with Part 3 to form a whole, and together they facilitate the heights and depths of what’s possible through unlocking the power of a song.

Like most fields of endeavour, it’s a choice how far we want to go. Certainly it’s unnecessary to journey far into Part 3 in order to

discover many of these heights and depths; and there’s so much to learn before we’re ready to explore how to vocalise the depth of our experience – which is what I mean by actually *Giving Voice*.

Be prepared to be surprised – about what this approach offers, whether you sing or not.

What to remember

- The *Giving Voice Process* is about our relationship with the song.
- It’s not about performance; nor does it necessarily involve singing aloud.
- If you ever feel you’re getting lost, imagine you’re in a landscape: all you need to do is retrace your steps to find your way again. This will not only help you become more familiar with the terrain, it may well provide surprising illumination – something that many participants have discovered.
- This is a S L O W book: there’s no need to rush, and every reason to keep stopping to enjoy the view!

However you approach this adventure, you’ll be part of a community of people who’ve made extraordinary discoveries through the *Giving Voice Process*. You’ll also be part of an even wider community of humans honouring the power of song, stretching backwards – and forwards – in time.

“Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.”

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*





Part 4

The Wider Reach of the *Giving Voice Process*

“It is the same with people as it is with riding a bike. Only when moving can one comfortably maintain one’s balance.”

Albert Einstein

Orientation

In Part 1 I touched on the role that the *Giving Voice (GV) Process* can have in expanding our awareness. This section looks at how we can facilitate its myriad aspects, and how life-enhancing qualities, capacities and states become more easily accessible. So many possibilities begin to unfold. And there's the potential for a continuous feedback loop, where we become increasingly in harmony with our deepest needs, and with the power of song. This in turn enhances what is possible in our lives, as well as in *GV*. We become more able to avoid a fragmented framework that reduces our sense of what being human is about, and to grow in embodying the qualities and capacities addressed in this whole section, such that:

- our attitudes and beliefs rooted in separateness diminish
- our capacity to experience wholeness and interconnectedness grows
- we become more discerning – in all sorts of respects – and come to know more deeply who we are, and our place in the world
- we nurture seeds of growth, and qualities that enhance our lives
- we become able to make wise(r) choices that are more harmonious with what deeply matters to us
- we develop more resilience, understanding and overall skill in living

Awareness is not only a fundamental aspect of the *GV Process*; it affects everything we experience, and the above-mentioned changes depend upon the extent to which we cultivate it. The opportunities for such cultivation are life-long. The whole of this section reveals more about what's possible through the *GV Process* in this respect.

The map opposite gives you a sense of what's in this section. You may at first sight be surprised at what it contains. Some of its contents may be familiar to you, some not. You may be reminded of things you've lost sight of, or discover a new 'take' on them. In company with many *GV* participants, I hope you find inspiration and illumination.

"Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens."

Carl Jung

*"... Now is the time to understand
That all your ideas of right and wrong
Were just a child's training wheels
To be laid aside
When you finally live
With veracity
And love ..."*

Hafiz (from the poem 'The Gift',
transl Daniel Ladinsky)

Frequently Asked Questions about Giving Voice (GV)

“Surely, GV is no different from simply singing?” It’s primarily about forming an intimate and dynamic relationship with a song, and reaping the benefits in life. Of course, singing of itself is immensely beneficial, yet ‘simply singing’ can rarely do more than scratch the surface of what song can offer. And perhaps paradoxically, the GV Process doesn’t necessarily involve singing! When it does, as **Iris** and **Abdul** – who both sing a lot – say respectively, *“It’s different from ‘ordinary’ singing”,* and *“It’s something else entirely! It’s unique for me, and offers me really profound learning”*.

“Why would I want to do this? – I already love singing!” I did too – and then I discovered something even more amazing through GV ... and it enhanced my singing, as it has done for other lovers of singing too (see above). As **Christine** once said, *“GV is never commonplace, never ordinary”*.

“Why on earth would I want to do GV on my own?” If I hadn’t become ill, I would have asked the same question! Since it’s such an intimate process, we need to explore it on our own; even with a trained facilitator, we can’t go very far unless we do this. It’s often a continuing journey of discovery. **Kate** – perhaps like many – used to feel that she wouldn’t be able to do it on her own. But she then discovered *“I can, and it works! And it becomes easier the more I do it”*.

“What could GV offer me? – I can’t sing!” Everyone deserves – and can forge – a deep relationship with song, whether we believe we can sing or not. **Estelle** is one of many whose experience with GV has made her change her mind. She says, *“If you feel you can’t sing, Jill has this amazing technique to allow a sound to come out”*. See [Chapters 2 and 4](#).

“Why do you only use one line of music?” This is for a number of reasons, eg a) more lines of music aren’t much use when we’re on our own, and b) we can easily become distracted by harmonies, particularly when starting to learn this approach. Most GV recordings are just a single voice too; initially this was because of my health limitations, but this led me to realise the incredible value of one solo, unadorned ‘a cappella’ voice, that involves engagement rather than performance. There’s just us and the song – as we sing it silently or aloud. As such, there’s no room, or need, for anything else. On the other hand, group GV events tend to be different, since they serve a more wide-ranging purpose, and they often involve harmonies – either improvised or taught by ear. These groups offer much, yet the fullest power of a song may still elude us in these settings, as many participants have observed. **Caroline** for example reports thus on her experience with *I Am One with All There Is* (No. 4): *“While I love singing it in a GV group – finding my place within the harmonies – I’ve gained most through engaging with it on my own.”*

“Why don’t you provide recordings with the book?” It’s because of what’s involved in unlocking the power of a song (see Chapter 9), and I know what people are like (including me!): most people would simply put on a recording without any thought or preparation at all – which means the songs’ power is likely to be unreachable. As I’ve always facilitated this unlocking process through teaching songs by ear, I’ve had to find another way as far as this book is concerned. Do (re)visit [The Way In to the songs](#) (p 22) for how to approach the music on the page, whether or not you know how to read it – as our friend **Adagio** says, this is a different way of approaching music.

“Are there any other songs you recommend for exploring on my own?” Absolutely. Some of the most easily accessible ones are listed on p 346. See also ‘How we Choose the Song’ (p 254).

“Is it therapy?” It’s a self-directed learning process. It’s not therapy, though it is therapeutic.

“Is it about healing?” People have often said, *“It’s very healing”* for example, or *“I feel it’s helping to heal me inside”*. As Freda Davis’s poem intimates (see Chapter 1), healing is inevitable when we become more at one – which is something the *GV Process* facilitates, whatever our state of health. And as Prof Kate Lorig says, *“The power of people doing things for themselves is very strong medicine”*.

”Is it like ‘affirmations’ or ‘positive thinking’?” A participant with experience of affirmations comments, *“GV works from inside out, affirmations work from outside in”*. This might help explain how *GV* can promote deep inner confidence, among other things. See also ‘How Far we Engage with the Song’ in Chapter 9, Addressing Negativity in Chapter 16, and what Rachel says about the *Patterns Song* (No. 21).

Is *GV* compatible with other approaches? The relationship between the *GV Process* and other approaches including Yoga, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Emotional Freedom Technique, and even Homoeopathy, has been remarked on by a number of participants. Yet while it’s compatible with many approaches, this is not always the case. If you are engaged in a therapeutic approach of any kind, it is recommended that your practitioner (if any) is informed. If you are doing it on your own, feel free to contact the Foundation for help in establishing how the two approaches might or might not ‘fit’, and to consider the implications. If you are a practitioner and want to explore integrating *GV* into your work, do contact us about this.

“Is *GV* spiritual or religious?” At its most profound, *GV* can be described as a deeply spiritual practice. However, do read the section on Expanded Awareness (p 9) for why I tend to avoid using the term ‘spiritual’.

“Is *GV* compatible with my religion/spiritual practice/secular beliefs?” It’s a contemporary approach based on contemporary needs, whatever tradition, if any, we may espouse. Many feel it enhances their moral and/or spiritual commitment and practice, and it’s been found to resonate with a variety of religious or spiritual

approaches, including all the world’s main religions, as well as shamanism and other forms of paganism. *GV* participants may include Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Humanists, Pagans, Agnostics. **Estelle**, who had chanted and meditated for many years prior to encountering *GV*, reports that she has never experienced any conflict between *GV* and these other approaches. For what some others have said in relation to this question see our website.

“What does the word ‘unitive’ mean in *Giving Voice*? It’s informed by my on-going training in awareness (see ‘Where does *GV* come from’ below), which has led me to realise that as we become more ‘unitive’ (i.e. move towards unity), we become more fully able to experience the nature of the whole – and our place in it – and to recognise the illusory nature of separateness; we perceive beyond difference, exclusivity and cynicism; we take increasing cognisance of the whole, including the planet we inhabit and share with all beings; we become able to transcend artificial groupings, including nations or football teams (and their respective anthems – however good they may feel to sing!). A unitive perspective tends to emerge through an on-going learning and growing process, and *GV* has the potential to facilitate this. **Jackie**, a doctor, wrote of her first experience of a *GV* group as *“a deeply powerful unitive process for all present”*, recognising that she could *“learn a lot through it”*. What Jackie and others have experienced through *GV* tends to be different from the apparent sense of unity that singing may promote – even if it feels wonderful and spine-tingling; so much depends on intention and awareness, and what we’re willing to let go of. As Tolstoy said, *“my unity with all people cannot be destroyed by national boundaries and government orders”*. It’s very different from ‘solidarity’, which is a sense in which it is often used, and which inevitably involves ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’; when confronted with adversarial situations, this can be particularly challenging – please see section on Love in Chapter 15 for an inkling of what’s possible in such circumstances; see also Interconnectedness in Chapter 14, Visual Aids, particularly Model A in Visual Aid No. 3 in this supplement, ‘Expanded Awareness’ in Chapter 3, and ‘The Impact of this Approach’ (Chapter 4).

“Is *GV* spiritual singing?” It depends what is meant by this. I’ve had countless experiences of ‘spiritual singing’ which are miles away from the connectedness that *GV* facilitates – even with songs that we