

## Chapter 8

### Living voice

Everything alive makes a sound according to its nature and the most characteristic sound of human beings is our voice. Everybody has a very particular quality of voice and specific way of expression. In my mother tongue the voice is called "Stimme" and destiny "Bestimmung", the voice that is given to us. This suggests that the voice is very closely related to the essence of our being. Our voice is changing with the time but never the less there is always also an unchanging tone present in it, a sound characteristic for ourselves.

The newborn baby starts to cry and express its needs mainly through the voice; crying is a powerful link between our emotions and voice. Crying as well as laughing is speaking directly to our heart and breaking down the barriers of separation. Those more instinctive sounds are very powerful and coming from the depths of our being. Laughing, crying, giggling, humming and simply playing around with our voice and letting it go free is a wonderful way to release emotional and mental tensions and warm up our voice and vocal chords.

The essence and carrier of the voice is our breath becoming audible; becoming a tone, vowel, syllable and word. It's a beautiful experience to feel that link and connection between breath and voice in a conscious and healing way and cultivate a more loving and sensitive relationship to our voice.

What is the difference between breathing and singing? What is needed for our breath to become our voice? How does it feel when we give birth to our voice consciously?

Discovering the voice is a great journey and healing indeed; this is our voice, the most personal and intimate expression of our being and nobody else has that same voice quality and timbre. Any vocal expression needs the activity of our spirit, it needs us to give the command and impulse for our voice to rise and be heard, for our breathing to become a tone. By that the neutral sound of the breath gets charged with the quality of one of the elements and becomes a vowel.

The 5 vowels are the most significant expression of the voice. Every tone is expressing the quality of a vowel or a combination of vowels. U, O, A, E, I are bringing the voice out, make it heard, and in combination with consonants form syllables and finally language. The slow movement through the vowels makes us realize their particular quality and resonance places in the body and by opening that resonance we cultivate a more reach and vibrant voice and awareness of the energetic flow of prana throughout our body.

Through breathing and toning we can build our inner temple of harmony, learn to move with our voice into different body regions, charge and balance our energetic body. The vowels are also a key to enter the world of overtones and a more universal or cosmic dimension of the voice. Overtone singing is leading definitely into a more transpersonal field of voice and harmony and the sung overtones are pure harmonies free from our personal character. As the infinite sound becomes personal through our voice the overtones bring it back to its infinite origin.

Of course speech and language are a means of communication, but on a more hidden level our voice is carrying a message beyond the words and logical context.

Like every living sound also our voice is transmitting such hidden codes of harmony, expressing the feeling and charge given to it. Some people's voice we love, other

people's voices we can't stand. There is a cognitive content of language and a subtle but clear quality and message arriving with every word spoken.

Speaking to a baby we automatically change our voice, intend to calm it down with a song, speak gibberish or giggle and beyond all of that we communicate and speak a soul language. The same word can convey a thousand meanings, it is the music in it that counts and reaches the much deeper levels of our being. We automatically speak in a very different voice to our child, lover, teacher, friend or policeman.

We can express all the range of emotions with our voice, charge it with any feeling or spirit, give an intention and it will pass and have an effect on the listener.

Our voice is the most living sound, there is a breath and soul behind it and that life-force has a creative power and far reaching effect.

Thinking already creates a potential reality but expressing a thought or feeling vocally, actually saying it, is definitely a further step towards manifestation. With every word we can create so much joy or suffering and speaking without clarity can be very destructive. Our voice has a magnetism and atmosphere that depends our inner state of being and discovering our voice means discovering all the layers of our personality, coming in touch with who we really are. To a good listener the voice of a person not only reveals his present condition, mood and life- situation but also his general consciousness and state of evolution. Life is full of challenges and part of its mastery is to learn to regulate our speech and voice according to every situation and give the correct message that is needed with every word we say or tone we sing.

The power of song is going even much beyond that and can express a big range of spirit and emotion. In singing we use a more deep breathing and the voice is especially charged with life- force. We are using prolonged vowels that are revealing the harmonics more clearly and melodies that are expressing a certain harmony.

Songs are speaking on many levels and vocal music in general is the most touching.

A singer not only sings a certain text but reveals his feeling and spirit, opens his heart, celebrates, prays or cries and creates a very far reaching effect.

Many great singers influenced the life of generations of people, speaking into their heart, touching their problems, feelings and hopes, being a friend on the way, messenger, preacher or warrior. All the popular music is songs; simple people want to feel the person behind the music. We need to learn to receive our voice more than making it. It is already there and we just need to give it space to become clearly heard and present. Children many times just sing and so do many simple people that live in more natural environments, because singing makes us happy and feel at home. In modern life many people develop all kind of blocks and reasons not to sing anymore and loose that innocent expression and joy, loose the trust in their voice and their connection to it. Everybody can sing and once that door is opened again it brings a lot of healing and release into our life.

Singing, toning and chanting in a group is creating a field of vibratory energy that embraces us and gives the possibility to melt into a pool of voices, experience the give and take in vocal communion and connect to a more universal level of group-consciousness and harmony.

Every music culture has a very particular vocal cultivation and certain timbre and melodic ornamentations that need to be mastered in order to sound authentic.

In some ancient styles of singing the voice was cultivated in a way that touches a more magical and universal quality and some of the best singers were yogis and magicians. Tansen, an Indian saint and singer was creating fire by singing a specific

raga connected to the fire element, Orpheus from Greece was communicating with the animals and spirits of the forest through his music and Tibetan monks used their chanting as a vehicle into other realms of spirit. Since the beginning of human history the voice was the main tool to communicate with nature, spirits, ancestors and gods. The priests or shamans of a tribe were the living link between the people and the higher powers, their singing in a more archaic and primal way resonating with the forces of nature and life.

Our voice is a living link to nature and all existence and our song a beautiful answer to the mystery of life; singing makes us feel part of something grander and resonate with the universal chord of nature's symphony.

### ***Transformation***

*In the time I started to teach and give workshops I attended several courses of music therapy to learn the basics about setting, safe space and group process. In one of those courses the therapist opened up a very beautiful space of guided improvisation with all kind of instruments like gongs, bowls, drums, all kind of percussion and in general tools that could be played by everyone. We did several rounds of improvisation with different themes and had to choose an instrument for every round that would serve our expression.*

*There was one lady in the group that was always taking a very shy and quiet place, spoke with a fragile voice and in general seemed to feel uncomfortable and embarrassed with the group situation.*

*For every round of improvisation she picked the same instrument, a small kalimba with a very gentle "kling kling" sound that anyway disappeared as soon as more instruments were played. She didn't seem to mind that and stayed in her own world with her little kalimba. In one of the sessions the theme was to express the "hidden or unheard" within ourselves. This round really got wild and I remember banging some cymbals and tremendously enjoying myself making a lot of noise. Everybody really let go and at some stage my attention fell on the lady with her kalimba; there she was sitting on the side making "kling kling" and from time looking over to the big gong.*

*The therapist saw it and brought the gong closer to her placing the clappers in front of her feet. It took a little while and she put the kalimba aside and took them into her hand. Slowly she started to play, hit the gong gently, felt the vibration, hit it a bit stronger, felt into it again until she was finally banging the big gong with all her power and the whole room was shaking. She ended her outbreak with a deep and intense animal like screaming. Everything stopped for a moment and she sank to the ground completely exhausted.*

*In the next sharing circle she appeared like a different person. Her body language had changed, she was present and confident and spoke with a clear and touching voice. She had had a major breakthrough and was completely new and reborn, had released a false layer and aspect of herself. Her face was relaxed and open, her eyes shining, she had made a wonderful step of transformation.*