

Vocal Improvisation as divine communication

This paper explores the subject of vocal improvisation as a method to communicate with source to receive and relay information conducive to healing.

Silvia Nakkach, an award winning composer and author of book *Free Your Voice*, believes “The voice is the gatekeeper. Spirit uses our voice as a vehicle to sing through us”(Nakkach, 2013). She believes the universe is always singing, the melodies are in the air, the plants, the stars and in our bones and by deep listening we are able to receive them. Silvia as well as shamans throughout the ages believe that melodies and sounds given by spirit have the ability to heal and impart insight.

One of the foundational components of improvisation is the ability of the singer/healer to remain present. Remaining present enables the healer to absorb and access the information being presented in each moment. The concept of singing and music being something that was pre organized outside of “this moment” is an idea that is foreign to many indigenous cultures. In his interview with *The Music Instinct* Bobby McFerrin explains how his friend, composer Yo Yo Ma encountered this principal when working with tribes from Botswana Africa. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/musicinstinct/video/interviews/music-and-evolution-bobby-mcferrin-on-culture-and-music/41/>

Bobby recalls Yo Yo Ma wanted to write down a song the village shaman had shared. After the first time it was sung Yo Yo Ma asked for it to be sung a second time to make sure he notated it correctly. After it was sung a second time, Yo Yo Ma noticed it was different and asked the shaman why. The shaman laughed and responded “The first time I sang it there was a herd of antelope in the distance and a cloud was passing over the sun” (McFerrin, 2009). To the shaman, the very act of singing a song that does not include what is happening in the present moment is impossible. The song that is sung is always the song of this moment, connected to what is happening right here, right now.

Shamanic facilitator Franco Santoro says the role of the shaman is to be connected to the whole, to be connected to the energy field of all. To be able to be in the energy field of the whole as opposed to aligning with a separate identity enables the shaman to access other non-ordinary states of consciousness and realms. The shaman/healer enters an altered state of consciousness in which their awareness and perception extends beyond the physical senses and functioning of the ordinary mind. It is through the act of letting go of the ordinary mind, that enables the healer to commune with spirit, guides and higher consciousness (Santoro, 2013).

This phenomenon of communing with higher consciousness through altered states is also seen in religions around the world including Christianity. Glossolalia (otherwise known as speaking in tongues) and religious ecstasy vocal improvisation is commonly employed to bypass the individual's ordinary state of consciousness and mind, to access the higher realms. Light language is also a form of this where it is believed that the spoken improvised language contains codes of creation commonly used as an accession tool to receive information and healing ("What Is Light Language? ~ We Are 1 in Spirit").

So what can vocal improvisation offer to one's practice as a sound healer? If an individual can talk or make sound than they have the capacity to vocally improvise. Voice is the original instrument. It does not require training or music theory knowledge to make sound. The voice, unlike some other musical instruments is tuned to nature, just intonation. Just intonation is the tuning system that is based on the harmonic series. This enables the voice to access a wide range of frequencies and harmonics (and their healing qualities on the body) that may not be available with other instruments. Overtones (originally developed by Tibetan and Mongolian monks) is the practice of singing the fundamental frequency with added harmonics simultaneously, to help a person attain spiritual and mediative states conducive to healing.

Jonathan Goldman, one of North America's renowned sound healers and practitioners of overtone singing, believes intention is just as important as

frequency. He offers a simple formula: Frequency + intention = healing (Goldman, 2002). This can translate as the intention held by the healer to include becoming a channel for the divine in the healing.

In summary, vocal improvisation makes use of the voice and its ability to utilise a wide spectrum of frequencies. The voice becomes an instrument of the divine when the singer/healer is able to let go of the ordinary state of mind and connect with the higher conscious.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/musicinstinct/video/interviews/music-and-evolution-bobby-mcferrin-on-culture-and-music/41/>

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