

**WHEN SINGING BECOMES KNOWING:
DEVELOPING SELF-KNOWLEDGE
THROUGH VOCAL PEDAGOGY**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore vocal pedagogy that places development of self-knowledge at the center of the investigation. I looked at the personal growth that occurred as a result of the distinctive qualities inherent in singing lessons that included spiritual practices. The goal for unity of body, mind, and spirit in performance bears a close resemblance to the basic meditative practices of mastery through repetition, intense listening, and deep connective breathing that have been used for thousands of years in all mystical traditions. The singing studio is a place where self-discovery can be encouraged and held with respect. This exploration examined vocal pedagogy as a means to finding one's personal voice. Little literature exists on voice and self-knowledge, and a search for relevant sources revealed that there appears to be no professional training available in the area of voice and self-knowledge, although many people appear to be developing their own strategies for this purpose. My own experience and practice as a voice teacher with a strong spiritual identity, places me as someone who may benefit from further information about voice and self-development.

The study consisted of two phases. Phase one consisted of interviews with three educators who use singing lessons as a tool for development of self-knowledge. The findings of these interviews informed phase two, which was a series of ten singing lessons given to one female adult student who had requested a type of singing study that would promote self-knowledge. The lessons used both traditional vocal techniques and spiritual practices.

I discovered that the use of spiritual practice combined with traditional vocal technique deepened the experience of the lessons and enhanced every aspect of my traditional vocal pedagogy. Research that involved the researcher and the process of research so intimately allowed a pedagogy to emerge that is responsive, deliberately non-linear, in which curriculum is shaped dialogically by both student and teacher in an intimate evolving relationship.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This thesis, which is a study of vocal pedagogy that places self-knowledge at the center of the endeavour, begins with two vignettes from a series of singing lessons. The purpose and the context of the study follow the vignettes. Chapter one concludes with a review of relevant literature in several related areas and an account of the professional background knowledge of the researcher. Chapter two describes the study in detail. Chapters three and four contain the findings of the two phases of the research. Chapter five presents the researcher's conclusions, limitations of the study, and implications arising from the work.

Body, Mind, Spirit, Voice
You are song, a wished-for song
Go through the ear to the center,
Where sky is, where wind,
Where silent knowing.
Put seeds and cover them.
Blades will sprout
where you do your work.
(Rumi)

Singing Lesson One: The Story Begins

It feels like a good day to begin research. It is early September and it seems as if the world begins its schooling once again. Rachael is at my home, and we are going to have a brief singing lesson—for me to hear her voice and get an idea of her musical preference, and for Rachael to get an idea of the format of a traditional voice lesson. Then we will begin the lessons devoted to research.

Marie: *Let's begin with aligning the body for singing.* (I show her how to stand so that the body is in a position that encourages a relaxed and energized sound. The feet are hip distance apart, knees are flexed and relaxed, the spine is stretched easily so that the ribs are floating free, the sternum is lifted and relaxed).

Rachael: *This posture isn't comfortable.*

Marie: *We'll move on to vocalization.* (I show her how to sing vowels in a five-note sliding pattern that encourages the production of easy and free tone. In this way, the student gets the voice working freely, without worrying about tone production).

Rachael: *That makes me feel ridiculous.*

Marie: *Just slide up and down a five-note pattern.* (I demonstrate).

Rachael: *I can't do that.*

So far, nothing is going the way I planned. I continue on: no problem—this has happened in lessons before, just change the exercise or the tone or the perspective—**something** will shift: we'll move into a groove and the lesson will begin to flow. Let's go on to choosing repertoire. Rachael's voice is warm, rich, lovely, and large. From the little snippets that she has sung today, I notice that her speaking voice and singing voice have a similar rich tone, and both the singing voice and the speaking voice are produced completely in the chest register. This will dictate what repertoire is possible to sing in our beginning sessions, because of range limitations. Even so, there are lots of choices. Rachael is reticent about choosing anything. I bring out a Sarah McLachlan songbook and although they are songs that she enjoys, she doesn't want to sing them. Then I show her some Gordon Lightfoot—specifically “Song For a Winter's Night”: a few years ago Sarah McLachlan did a cover for this song. She doesn't recognize it and says she only likes older Sarah McLachlan songs. I pull out “The Rose” (an old Bette Midler song): she knows it and likes it, but doesn't want to sing it.

Marie: *OK, let's chat a bit.*

Rachael: *I feel very self-conscious when placed in the center of attention, and I don't like feeling “like an idiot”, which is how the exercises make me feel. I'm not complaining and I will do what you ask, I'm just stating my feelings.*

I am taken aback at the level of struggle Rachael has created as we moved from breathing exercises to vocalizations, to repertoire. It appears that self-consciousness has hijacked this session. We continue to talk, and Rachael

continues to explain why it isn't possible for her to sing exercises or repertoire. Finally I comment:

Marie: *Rachael, I think it is very true that you will find your voice through these sessions.*

Rachael: *Parts of my personality are very much in place, and parts I am not willing to reveal.*

Rachael also expressed a concern about the relationship between us, as teacher and student.

She said, *I would like to clarify the fact that we are approaching these sessions on an equal footing. I am learning from you, but there will be things that you will learn from me as well* (Journal entry, Sept 4, 09). I assured her that that will be the case.

Rachael left at 8 p. m. Having begun this session at 6:20 p. m., a simple half-hour session turned into a lengthy verbal tug-of-war.

As it turned out, that first session provided a very significant insight into the way the 10 sessions would take shape. The following is an excerpt from my diary that evening concerning the session:

My main impression from Rachael is one of an enormous resistance to the idea of singing. We ran through a number of vocalizations where she was quite uncomfortable with any unusual sound. Lip trills and slides were physically uncomfortable. There was a great sense of distress through the entire session, and by the end, Rachael was visibly upset. However, she appears to be committed to this process and I believe she will see it through. (Journal entry, Sept. 4, 09)

The session with Rachael left me concerned about my own resources. As a voice teacher, I have guided many people toward a deeper satisfaction with their own singing. I have successfully trained people for auditions and examinations. I have always been on sure footing pedagogically: when I needed to understand something more thoroughly, I consulted colleagues, read about it, or took a course. My experience as a voice teacher had formed the idea that I wished to explore in this research—namely that when one sings, one is able to access deeper patterns of conscious and unconscious personal behaviour. Through many years of teaching, I have noticed that when one

chooses a piece of music to sing, one is actually exploring a piece of one's life. To look at the music of our lives and the way we sing it may open opportunities for discovering a freer, more truthful expression of the self. Consequently, a traditional voice lesson may be a place for the intentional development of self-knowledge through self-expression.

Was I equipped to help someone who was looking for more than just creating a beautiful sound with his or her singing? I had a great enthusiasm for this project and although this session had been rocky, I looked forward to the work ahead that Rachael and I had planned. Before this preliminary session Rachael and I had met at a local pub for a getting-to-know-you session. We had a common interest in spirituality. Rachael was a massage therapist by profession. A mutual friend told me that she knew of someone who was looking to take singing lessons to “find her voice.” The synchronicity of this surprised me as I had just written a preliminary proposal for a thesis initially titled, *Finding your voice: Developing self-knowledge through vocal pedagogy*. After some phone conversations and the meeting at the pub, we had finally met to begin this, our singing journey, and it promised to be adventurous. As a singing teacher, I had assumed many roles, but I didn't ever remember a negotiator being one of them!

Singing Lesson Nine: Almost Finished

As always, we sat down at the dining room table with tea and honey, a lighted candle in the centre of the table. We discussed the progress of the last few sessions. I reminded Rachael of some comments she made in the previous week's session. She said:

All the restriction in my voice wasn't my voice. It was me damping it down. The resistance was me—it wasn't about anything else. So it's all about being heard, and do I have anything worth saying, and speaking loudly (T: The lessons, week nine).

Then we listened together as I played a portion of Rachael singing “The Rainbow Connection” in week five. Rachael commented, *I can definitely hear the*

difference when I suddenly stop keeping it all in. Because from one bar to the next it's like, hello, that's another person singing (T: Rachael, week nine).

We talked about “The Rainbow Connection” and the way that song has allowed Rachael to experience her voice without being self-critical. She talked about a screaming session that loosened a lot of emotion. She said:

In finding my own voice singing, I was working through some stuff one night and I realized how much I'm carrying. I've always had friends talk about a need to scream and a scream was right there in my throat. So I went to the car and shrieked. That was a huge breakthrough. (T: The lessons, week nine)

We continued discussing the value of recognizing the willingness to let a feeling go, instead of keeping it submerged. I read aloud the quote that I inserted on the sheets I had prepared for this session. Educator and author Brent Davis (2004) said, “Matters of the spirit are simply matters of the breath... . When we begin to attend to the breath, we attend to ourselves”. (p. 159)

We moved easily from conversation to some breathing exercises designed to seat the breath low in the body. Using the hands to pull up on the chair while inhaling; Rachael did this effortlessly and with no self-consciousness. We then began a vowel dialogue. I sang a vowel on a five-note pattern, and she mimicked it back. I asked Rachael to move further away, and we began some range extension exercises, again in a call-response fashion. I started the exercises on a pitch that is intentionally high and loud. She sang strong, high and with confidence in full head voice. Two months ago this was not even feasible! I showed her on the piano how high she was singing. She laughed.

I suggested that we sing “Song For A Winter’s Night” by Gordon Lightfoot. This is the song that Rachael would not consider singing in the preliminary lesson three months ago. She sang easily through it on an “ee” vowel. I encouraged her to slide from note to note to keep the tone flowing. No problem! She sang through all of the long sustained phrases. What I heard in this exchange that was different from previous sessions was an unmistakable sense of pleasure in singing this repertoire. With the pleasure came a naturally expressive musicality. This was new and a breakthrough. I was so impressed with the change in energy,

tone, and mood. We finished the session, very pleased with ourselves and each other.

In three months, Rachael had gone from feeling foolish doing any kind of vocal exercise to cascading her voice up and down the scale in full head voice. By lesson nine, she willingly used her body to help with technical vocal challenges. The lesson was still peppered with phrases like “I’m doing it wrong” and “I need to sing something familiar.” The difference from the initial September session was that she was willing to try new things, and accepted the change that would happen inevitably when she experimented with the production of her voice. She was willing and able to sing repertoire that had long phrases and high notes.

When I reread my notes from the session on September 4th, it was hard to recognize that this was the same person singing. Rachael had agreed in principle to everything I introduced in the preliminary session, but when it actually came to singing, she said no to every request I made and I really wondered if we could manage any progress through what appeared to be a solid wall of resistance. However, I believed from our initial meetings that Rachael truly did want to learn. This turned out to be true. As the sessions progressed, I watched the desire to change fuel her courageous spirit. In this way she moved through emotional blocks that had been inhibiting self-expression for years.

I am a voice teacher by profession, so it has been my business to recognize and suggest improvements in tone quality and song interpretation. In the process of encouraging students to create beautiful, expressive singing, I have always been fascinated with the process of inner-work that can take place when someone is studying a piece of music. Furthermore, I am intensely aware of the effect that singing has had on my life personally and on the lives of my singing students. As someone deeply interested and involved in spiritual practice, I have always been drawn to books, articles, movies—anything really—that explored the inner being of a person. I began to wonder if spiritual practice could combine with vocal pedagogy to provide a way for us

to connect to and express our innermost feelings. With the knowledge that this research would forever change my own professional practice and personal life, I formed my research statement and questions.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to explore vocal pedagogy that placed self-knowledge in the centre of the investigation. The following questions guided the investigation:

1. What approaches to singing are beneficial to facilitating self-knowledge, and what approaches are detrimental?
2. How can vocal training support transformation of the whole person—body, mind, spirit, and voice—in the context of a series of singing lessons?
3. When the goal of singing lessons is shifted from the development of the singing voice to the development of self-knowledge in the singer, how does this affect pedagogy?

An Earlier Story: The Artist Within Us All

About five years ago, I was teaching a singing lesson to John, a man in his late forties, who has a beautiful baritone voice. He is an engineer by profession, and I found that he had no trouble understanding the technical aspects of singing. Besides having a very attractive voice, he was also able to read music well, and he enjoyed some success in the local musical theatre guild because of this. In his lessons, I observed that he appeared somewhat detached from any emotion when he sang. During a lesson one day, he chose a Stan Rogers song to sing, called “The Field Behind The Plow.” This song tells the story of a farmer working in his field. It expresses in a very real way the pleasure of working the land and the worry that the harvest will not be adequate to cover all the bills. John’s rich voice soared through verse one and chorus, expressing the lyrics in a way that I had not heard from him before. Halfway through verse two, he

stopped singing abruptly. He had begun to weep and could not finish the song. He packed up his music and went home.

Although he continued on with his singing lessons, he never sang that song again. When I asked about the song, he told me that his father had been a farmer, and it brought up too many memories. We moved on to other repertoire, and he continued to use his singing lessons as a relaxation time in his week—a time to enjoy his beautiful voice, and forget about the other stresses of his life. John was not willing to face the emotions that surfaced when singing a song about his father. I knew that working through the powerful emotions that he was experiencing would be the key to bringing his whole being into his singing. I also knew that he was not willing to explore this emotion during the lesson time, and I didn't want to press him where he wasn't willing to go.

As a singing teacher, I have often watched as people responded with strong emotion to the music and lyrics of a song. A young woman who studied Grade nine-conservatory repertoire wrote me a poem about her singing lessons:

To sing is to exhale my soul
To sing is to smile with my heart
To sing is to feel a surge of power through my whole body.
Singing brings goose bumps all over my arms.
Singing makes each and every one of my senses open and alive.
When I sing, I am me.
When I sing, I can be any other person I want.
When I sing, music soars from every inch of my body.
I love to sing. (Marissa, 2004)

I love this poem, because to me it demonstrates the joy that we are capable of experiencing as singers when we engage body, mind, and spirit fully in the process. Transformative experiences present themselves to us in a variety of circumstances, and singing is one of those ways. In the next section, I will discuss how one can use the voice to connect to one's emotions for the

purpose of transformation and how a pedagogy that combines spiritual practices and traditional vocal technique can bring one to wholeness.

Context

In order to form a foundation for this work, I explored several areas of literature. In this section I present ideas from the literature and from my own professional knowledge. I discuss how the misuse of emotion causes us to disconnect from the state of wholeness represented in the phrase body, mind, and spirit. I explore theories of transformative learning, and the use of voice and self-expression. I then turn to an exploration of the experience of spirituality that connects singing to the arts and symbols, to embodied learning, and to mystical experience. The final topic in contextualizing the study is the importance of openness and vulnerability to self-knowledge.

Engaging the Emotions: Speaking With Our Own Voice

John's story and Marissa's poem are two examples I have encountered personally concerning the possibilities for self-knowledge inherent in a singing lesson. Clark and Dirkx (2001) spoke of emotion as:

not something that simply invades our experiences of teaching and learning, an alien force trying to mess up our best laid plans and intentions, a manifestation of our weak character or ability to control our emotions. Rather, through the expression of affect and emotion in adult learning, we are offered a kind of language for reinterpreting ourselves and the possibility to experience and recreate our sense of selves, our subjectivities, our being-in-the-world. (p. 90)

Because of my work as a voice teacher, I started to notice that a singer's emotional state of being was reflected directly in his/her vocal tone quality. For example, when John, (the engineer from the earlier story) sang through his songs in a lesson, or a performance, I would notice a certain "hollow" tonal quality that never changed with traditional pedagogical methods. Only when he

sang the song about his father and was surprised by the underlying emotions did the tone change, more accurately reflecting his inner reality. People are seldom comfortable with the idea of being surprised and overwhelmed by emotion, especially in public. Yet this is exactly what we admire in great artists. They have the capacity and the willingness to show us everything that they are feeling. The great artist takes the song that he or she is presenting and finds the most effective way to communicate that thought and emotion to the audience. In some ways, we have given recording artists, movie actors, poets—any kind of artist—permission to feel, truly and deeply, for all of us. We allow other people’s emotions to wash over us: while listening to the radio, or watching TV. Sometimes, if a performance has been particularly effective, we may even shed a tear, but we are quickly able to recover, and if we are very careful, no one will know we were affected by the performance. Strong emotion is carefully avoided with help from food, alcohol, or work, whatever we find that can successfully keep life on an emotionally even plane. In his book, *Emotional Clearing*, Ruskan (2000) explained the problems people encounter expressing emotion:

Suppression is the primary psychological mechanism that leads to emotional and spiritual dysfunction. . . . As experiences occur and are resisted, the energy is unable to be released because it has been blocked rather than absorbed; it cannot complete its cycle, *it cannot discharge into consciousness*. What we don’t realize is that when the energy of a feeling is not released, it does not go away, but stays with us, in latent form, as part of the psychic energy body [emphasis in original]. (pp. 23-24)

It appears that people need to find ways to let negative emotion release. One way that we could do that is by looking at the artistic process. Great artists have the courage and desire to explore their feelings within the framework of their artistic discipline. We all have the capacity for great joy and great pain, and as Ruskan (2000) has said, experience has recorded these moments in every psyche. Aynne Johnston (2003) began her Master’s thesis with the words “We are artists”

(p. 1). I have often thought this. When we live our life through the lens of the artist, we open ourselves to new perspectives. We can see the beauty, humour, and creative possibilities that arise in every life situation. Pablo Picasso said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up” (Cameron, 1992, p. 20).

Through years of singing lessons—as both the teacher and the student—I have noticed that one way to call forth the “artist within” may be through singing the songs that have stayed with us in life; the ones we remember word for word, and even the songs where just a chorus or a phrase lingers in our mind. The songs our parents sang to us, the ones we heard when we fell in love, out of love, when our children were born, when important things happened in our lives—these songs may have the power to unlock blocked emotion that is taking up valuable creative space in our psyche. The songs of our lives are like emotional punctuation marks in a life—question marks for unresolved issues, exclamation marks for joy or shock, periods for finality. In a study on music and informal-learning, Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) suggested that personal choice of music is often used to reflect self-identity, and that this is a tacit form of self-discovery. I suspect that we can all look back in time, and place moments of our lives within the context of a song. I wondered if it is as easy to identify the emotion that connects us to the song? Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) suggested that by

turning to different types of music and the meaningful parts that reflect and register self-identity and which provide a template for self-knowledge, individuals choose music that affords self-images that are tenable, that seem doable, habitable. (p. 296)

I began to ponder: if the connection between a singer’s emotional state of being and voice quality is apparent and recognizable to me (the teacher) listening, it may be useful information for the singer. Furthermore, like the great artist, the singer may be able to use this information to access areas of personality that have been buried or that have aroused conflicting emotions. Perhaps singing can be used to forge a connection between people’s inner reality and their outer

expression to the world. In *The artist's way*, Cameron (1992) quotes Shaef, "You need to claim the events of your life to make yourself yours" (Cameron, p. 10). Art gives us a way to do this, and singing is one of the most intimate artistic endeavours. If one could sing the song that stirs up a painful memory, the *experience* of singing could generate an emotional response. Ruskan explained that if this can be done without restraint or judgment, a connection can be made that places one "in the moment with the event" (Ruskan, 2000, p. 19). The process of awareness followed by acceptance and direct experience leads to transformation. I understand this to mean that when we suspend judgment concerning an experience we remove the personal attachment we have imposed on the event. The body is then free to experience the feeling and process that feeling as it was originally received. Ruskan explained, "By accepting, we go beyond. We reach the spiritual through the mundane. We discover the spiritual *in* the mundane" (p. 18). In John's case (my student who was overcome by tears while singing), his judgment that he could not deal with such strong emotions concerning his father shut down the process of awareness, acceptance, and direct experience as identified by Ruskan. Had he allowed himself to finish singing the song that reminded him of his father, he might have experienced some of his blocked emotion. Ruskan explained that "developing the capacity to accept leads to unobstructed feeling, catharsis, and the release of pain" (p. 18).

I thought that it might be useful to think of Ruskan's transformative process in combination with Mezirow's (1978) transformative approach to adult learning. Mezirow (1991) identified a number of stages of growth which can be roughly grouped into three phases (although not necessarily linear): (a) an encounter with a disorienting dilemma serving as a catalyst for change, (b) the trying on of new roles, and (c) the emergence of new beliefs about life, work, and/or personal potential. In a discussion on the reason for transformative learning, Mezirow said:

In order to be free we must be able to 'name' our reality, to know it divorced from what has been taken for granted, to speak with our own voice. Thus it becomes crucial that the individual

learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others. Transformation theory provides a description of the dynamics of the ways adults learn to do this.

(p. 3)

Mezirow's idea of naming our reality provides a way for our mind to understand and bring meaning to our experiences. Ruskan's idea of suspending judgment of our reality offers the body a way to use the naming experience to release negative emotions we have buried. Using elements of emotional clearing and transformative theory might allow body and mind to work together for the purpose of releasing negative emotion. The result might be the creation of a freer spirit. Freedom to express a wider range of emotion is deeply connected to self-expression. The way that teacher and student use the music that a student chooses in a singing lesson is one way to move toward freedom of self-expression.

Repertoire As a Tool for Transformation

I believe that the choice of repertoire for vocal study is one way that a student can "name" some portion of his or her reality. In the case of John, the "disorienting dilemma" that Mezirow referred to could be the experience of singing the song that reminded him of his father. Had he allowed himself to continue singing on the day that he was overwhelmed by tears, he might have sung himself into a new awareness of himself; namely, someone who was still experiencing grief over the death of his father. By "trying on a new role" (that of someone consciously experiencing grief while singing), he might have been able to integrate the experience of loss into his psyche, thus allowing himself a fuller range of expression than he had previously experienced. In doing so, his initial choice of musical material (the song about farming and his father), might have offered John an opportunity to examine the meaning of his experience, thus providing the freedom of which Mezirow speaks. This is good news, because it means that we can free ourselves from old immature ideas that may be inhibiting potential growth. Once John had named his experience as

“someone still grieving,” he might have been able to give himself permission to let the tears flow as he sang. This is where the theory of “emotional clearing” as identified by Ruskan enters into the process. Singing the song that reminded him of his father without judging himself for crying removes the barrier to direct experience of emotion. He sings, he cries his grief, and freedom from hurtful unconscious emotion is created. Through conversation, observation, support, and direct experience, he can initiate new, more affirming habits, as old limiting ideas and values are uncovered and examined for their limitations. Choice of repertoire and the conscious use of that repertoire in relation to the singer may be one way to provide all of Mezirow’s criteria for transformative learning and Ruskan’s theory of emotional clearing.

Self-Expression

In a discussion concerning psychology and the voice Paul Newham (1999) said:

Working on the vocal instrument does not only nurture the sonorous power of the acoustic voice, it releases the soulful power of our psychological voice and increases the sound of our presence in the world. Having a voice means having impact and influence (p. 10).

The minute we are born, we begin to use our voice to convey our desires. That lusty cry as we emerge from our mother’s womb is the beginning of a lifetime of expression, and we appear, in infancy, to understand intuitively how to use our voice to express every desire. In a discussion of human communicative interaction, Thurman (2000) wrote that

These early experiences lay foundations for the development of empathic relatedness, constructive competence, and self-reliant autonomy. Most of these processes occur outside our conscious awareness. Self-expression with our voices is connected to the deepest, most profound sense of ‘who we are’. (p. 175)

We can access this “deepest, most profound sense of who we are” through the acquisition of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge comes when one is willing to receive it; it is experiential in nature,

its value is evident in the way one relates within personal and community life. My student Rachael began the process of accessing self-knowledge when she confided to someone her desire to be able to express herself more clearly through singing lessons. There is a well-known Buddhist proverb that says, “when the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” This has always been the case in my own life. For John, the student who was surprised by the emotions that arose when he sang about his father, the time was not right for him as the student, or me as the teacher.

Spirituality and Singing

For the purposes of this thesis, I use the word spirituality to describe the capacity to move beyond our intellect and senses, to a deeper understanding of our inner being, offering us the freedom and capacity to live more fully as ourselves. The capacity I speak of is in relation to the mystical aspect of life. The Encarta dictionary definition of mysticism is “an immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of God or ultimate reality attained through personal religious experience.” When I omit the word *religious* from this sentence, and insert the word *spiritual*, I would call this a fine definition of the experience I am suggesting. In my personal musical life, this definition could help to explain the declaration of the young woman, who, after a performance while our choir was touring in Greece said, *I found my soul in that song*, or a young man I observed who burst into tears in the middle of the performance of a Bach Cantata. A search for relevant literature has shown that spirituality can mean many different things to different people and examining this literature brings forward recurring ideas. The same descriptive words and phrases are found in much of the literature that attempts to explain the spiritual experience; words such as *transformative* (Miller, 1996), *heart-centered* (Huitt & Robbins, 1993), *self-knowledge* (Palmer, 1997), *reflection*, and *holistic education* (Duerr, Zajonc, & Dana, 2003).

Body, Mind, Spirit, and Voice

Singing is one way to have an integrated experience that involves all aspects of ourselves.

Learning to sing well has traditionally included techniques such as mastery through repetition,

intense listening, and deep connective breathing. These are meditative practices that have been used for thousands of years in many mystical traditions. In a traditional singing lesson the study of vocal repertoire combined with technical practice in singing is intended to create beauty. Combined with the mindful use of poetry, the singer can set up the conditions for a unified experience of body, mind, and spirit. Emotions connect to words and music for a complete expression that may transcend conventional understanding.

The Arts and Symbols

Lyrics in a song can become symbolic of an unconscious emotion. For example, the lyrics of “Que Sera Sera” (1956), made famous by the American jazz singer Doris Day always bring to mind the symbol of a mother’s love to me. My mother sang “Que Sera Sera” to me as a child, and in turn, I sang it to my children when they were little. When I hear the song it immediately sends me back to an image I have of my mother singing while we looked out the parlour window. One time when I visited my son at university I noticed that he was humming “Que Sera Sera” as we walked along the street. The song has become symbolic to me as I have accorded it meaning in my life. Boyce-Tillman (2007) discussed this association of music with moments in our lives. She discussed the relevance of connecting personal memory to certain musical selections when she explained, “this offers the possibility for passionate social transformation as the experience of the Other [the sacred] is internalized” (p. 1409). Family love could be thought of as a universal experience of the Other. I suspect that my son was not thinking about love as he was humming the song I used to sing to him. No matter, I heard and received that love while he hummed away unconsciously.

Explaining the importance of symbols, Jung (1978) said, “as the mind explores the symbol [connected to a word], it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason” (p. 4). Jaffé, in Jung (1978) explained how symbols can be found in every aspect of our lives, “in fact, the whole cosmos is a potential symbol” (p. 257). Dirx (1998) talked about imagination and the use of

symbols in transformative learning. Symbols can be used to call forth aspects of the self that “remain hidden from conscious awareness yet serve to influence and shape our sense of self” (p. 7). He validated the arts as one way to gain access to the symbols in our lives when he explained:

Certainly, a critical dimension of such a pedagogy [transformative learning] is honoring and giving voice to the expressive aspects of our experience, manifest largely in symbolic forms within our daily lives. These forms include story, myths, rituals, dance, poetry, music, metaphor, images, fantasy and dreams. We have only just begun to understand how these forms are manifest within our work with adult learners and how we might better understand their meanings within this context. (p. 8)

Bringing to light the symbols that live in our songs might be one way to connect our every day lives to our sacred lives.

Connecting To The Sacred

Hill (2001) discussed adult learning in relation to new discoveries in brain research and consciousness. She described research that demonstrated that our physical being is connected to our spiritual being through energy patterns in our brain that we call consciousness. She said “consciousness refers to the ability to be self-aware and make meaning of our experience” (p. 77). She went on to say, “this energy [of consciousness] is characterized not merely as physical energy, but as psycho/spiritual/material energy. In other words, people do not exist only on the individual physical level, but also in connection with each other and the spiritual dimension” (p. 77).

The thought that we are connected to each other through the energy patterns in our brain is an idea that could be called mystical. Underhill (1999) has spent a lifetime examining the mystical experience. She related the path of the mystic to an ordinary person’s life when she said, “To be a

mystic is simply to participate here and now in that real and eternal life; in the fullest, deepest sense which is possible” (p. 447). Boyce-Tillman (2007) talked about mystical experience that related specifically to music. She examined the relationship between the person having the mystical experience and the mystical experience itself. I was taken by a story that she recounted told by the great educator, John Dewey who said:

A friend persuaded me to go to Ely cathedral to hear a performance of Bach’s minor B mass... . The music thrilled me until we got to the great Sanctus. I find this experience difficult to define. It was primarily a warning—I was frightened. I was trembling from head to foot and wanted to cry. Actually I think I did. I heard no “voice” except the music; I saw nothing, but the warning was very definite. I was not able to interpret this experience satisfactorily until I read some months later, Rudolphe Otto’s *Das Heilige*. Here I found it: the “Numinous”. (Boyce-Tillman, p. 1411)

In reading this account, I am uncertain about what it is that Dewey “found” in this encounter. However, I imagine that his interpretation of the event impacted his life in ways that no one could understand but Dewey himself. A profound physical reaction, combined with receiving a message that he understood to be meant for him from within the music, resulted in a numinous experience.

Spirituality and Learning: Embodied Knowledge

The mystical experience that Dewey underwent at Ely Cathedral could be called an experience of embodied knowledge, as the message that Dewey received caused him to “tremble from head to foot.” As I am interested in the mystical experience, I have heard many stories that could not be explained rationally from people who would never consider themselves to be mystics. Most people do not talk about their numinous encounters because experiences such as these have not been given much credibility over the last 400 years. Davis (2004), Clark (2001), Bressler (2004) and Cahill (2006) discussed the separation of body, mind, and spirit that happened around the time of Descartes (1596-1660), together with the emergence of scientific thought. With

Descartes' theory of formal logic, the power of the mind was secured. Numinous experiences such as that of Dewey in the cathedral were of no consequence, and could be explained away rationally.

Davis (2004) explained that Descartes' famous phrase, "I think, therefore I am," represented the accepted thinking of the day. "Among his deduced truths was that he, as a knowing agent, was an incorporeal thinking thing—that is, a mind that is distinct from a body" (p. 66). Clark (2001) said that before the time of Descartes, "things were not always this way. In medieval times, knowing was more emotional, more internal, more connected to the natural world" (p. 84). She went on to say, "A person 'knew' something by being deeply and intimately connected to it, a knowing that was somatic and emotional" (p. 84). Certainly we still have the capacity to 'know' somatically and emotionally. Our bodies are constantly signaling information to us. Almost everyone has had the experience of the hairs on the back of the neck rising, in a warning of danger, or in a state of wonder and awe. Our mind often takes a back seat to a gut reaction when we are making a decision. Eisner (2002) described this knowing that uses our senses:

Some images resonate with our gut, others with our eyes, still others with our fantasies; artists play with our imagination. Some visual images are essentially tactile experiences". (p. 19)

A tactile or sensual experience processes knowledge physically; hence we have the term embodied knowledge. Bressler (2004) defined embodiment as "the integration of the physical or biological body and the phenomenal or experiential body." In terms of learning, she said, "to work in a 'paradigm of embodiment' is not to study anything new or different, but to address familiar topics—healing, emotion, gender, power, from a different standpoint" (p. 7). The following story is a personal example of embodied learning that I experienced with my choir as we prepared for a festival in Spain, in the summer of 2007.

Story: Lisa Teaches

During a rehearsal two years ago, my choir and I were part of an experience of embodied learning. An emaciated six-year-old girl named Lisa, who would soon die of cancer, stood in front of the choir as we rehearsed, with her hands cupped to her ears listening to the music with every part of her being, later to finger-paint colourful images of the sound she heard. As I watched her listening, I was aware that I was witnessing *listening* in a pure form: disease had stripped everything from this young girl except her senses. The alert state of her body pressing slightly forward, the open expression on her face, hands cupped to ears, told us that she heard what we could not. Everyone in the room was visibly moved by the listening of this young girl.

We could all see that Lisa would die soon, and that was very hard for all of us to absorb. What we could also see was the extra capacity of focused awareness that Lisa was able to engage as a result of her illness. I would have liked to discuss this with the choir later, but at the next rehearsal, when I showed them the pictures that Lisa had painted, they were unable to speak about it. At the same time the looks on their faces, the way they held their bodies told me that it was clear that they had been deeply moved. I assumed that the experience was too much for them to hold and resumed our rehearsal.

The direct experience of spirituality in our lives leaves an imprint on anyone present to witness it or take part in it. I suggest that Lisa gave the choir an experience of holistic learning. A survey on the transformative dimensions of spirituality in higher education (Duerr, Zajonc & Dana, 2003) defined holistic education as “education that deals with the whole person, the wholeness of experience, and the interconnectedness of experience” (p. 1870). Witnessing Lisa’s extraordinary capacity to listen as the choir sang must be an example of learning that deals with the *whole person*. All three of Duerr, Zajonc and Dana’s criteria for holistic learning were met. Lisa listened to the choir sing with every part of her being, and she lived the *whole experience* of heightened listening as the choir sang. The *interconnectedness of experience* arose in the relationship forged between the choir’s reaction to Lisa as she listened to their music and Lisa’s response to the

beauty of their music with finger paintings in a rainbow of colours. This is a circle of appreciation that must be called holistic. It could also be an example of “wonder and awe” (Heschel, 1998).

The Numinous: Wonder and Awe

Another phrase I read frequently in the literature on spirituality was the experience of “wonder and awe.” Abraham Joshua Heschel (1998) said that “ the beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe” (p. 52). I have experienced this idea of “wonder and awe” through the choral art, when singers and conductor together strive to create the meaning locked within the notes and words of the music. When that moment of understanding comes, a new space is created where unity of purpose supersedes knowledge. This is the place where each moment is imprinted on a life, and that imprint cannot be erased. This moment in time creeps up on us like a gentle thief, taking away our previous ideas and replacing them with a seed of wisdom. Once in place, this experience will impact a life in small ways until we have changed our ideas from the inside out. The following is a personal experience that held wonder and awe for me. It happened during a youth choir tour.

Story: Greece, 2004

I was in Greece with my choir in 2004, performing in a sacred music festival. The choir had worked very hard, and the connection between singers and me was very strong. We had added a meditative vocal warm-up to our daily routine; we began this warm-up in silence, then moved gently into communal breathing, then into vocalization. The singers commented on how settled this made everyone feel. The competition was at 2 p.m. on a hot day in Greece and we were dripping with sweat before we began to sing our five songs. Our hard work and deep personal connection to the music and ourselves led us into an artistic space that we had never reached previously with this music. During the third song, (a narrative ballad about shipwreck in Fogo, Newfoundland), I could see members of the choir singing with tears streaming down their faces. Their voices rang clear with meaning and emotion as they sang their way to the end of the song. Two more songs to go and nothing could stop the rise of power in our communal

voice as we completed our performance. As we left the room and spilled out into the courtyard beyond, we experienced each other differently—from an elevated sense of awareness. In my mind, I can still hear one of the young women who said, “I found my soul in ‘The Green Shores of Fogo’” (the third song we had sung). In that moment, I understood, in an embodied way. What I understood is difficult to put into words, but it involved a unified experience of body, mind, and spirit.

Since the trip to Greece, when members of the choir get together with me or each other they talk about our experience singing in Greece. We won a gold medal for that performance, but I know that the members of the choir and I value the experience of the singing in a way that no gold medal could be valued. As a singer, I recognized this integration of body, mind, and spirit as an experience similar to past artistic moments. Although it is rare and never predictable, it is completely recognizable from within the experience. It was an added pleasure to see the wonder that it created in the young choir members. When true knowledge of an embodied kind arrives, I have learned to stay open in awareness and gratitude until it leaves. I know that I have no control over creating this experience; that no control is needed other than to be open and receptive when it happens. These extraordinary moments in life bring richness to experience. I believe that my awareness of this possibility and my openness to receiving a transformative experience may create the container in which I receive this depth of knowing (Palmer, 2007). A container that holds deep knowing has no material power and yet it is all we need to allow understanding to take place within us.

Openness and Vulnerability

Huitt & Robbins (1993) said, “One component of spirituality is the intimacy with which people follow their life experiences. Many of the so-called larger than life people ... are profoundly present to the continuum of their lives” (p. 9). To sing your life with conscious reflection of specific occasions and the emotions surrounding those events must be an intimate experience as

referred to by Huitt and Robbins. Self-expression is born from singing that engages our minds and bodies to work together to tell our story.

To decide to sing our story to others leaves us vulnerable to the opinions of the other. Singing for others is like offering a very intimate gift to someone. What if they don't like it, or worse yet, what if they criticize your gift, or make fun of it? What if you don't really like what you are offering yourself? James Jordan conducts choirs and teaches at Westminster College, Princeton University. I attended Jordan's summer classes on vocal technique and conducting from 1997 to 2005. In those sessions, he often discussed the connection between great art and personal reflection. In his book, *The musician's soul* (1999), he discussed the importance of openness and vulnerability when conducting a choir. He said:

To be able to make music, one should make a presupposition. That presupposition is that one is able to be open and vulnerable... . Openness is the ability to recognize, accept and trust oneself; to understand and appreciate the experiences that contribute to one's life... . One's vulnerability allows another to experience a spirit and to engage a living soul through music... . Vulnerability is born out of each person's unique experience... . I believe that every human being has experienced vulnerability in some aspect of his life. (pp. 31-32)

The Experience of Vulnerability

I know through direct experience that vulnerability is an uncomfortable emotion to experience. I also know that an experience of vulnerability can be life changing. Last year, as part of my graduate studies requirements, I took a course in "Spiritual Autobiography" through the theology department at Queen's University. Near the end of the term, I had four major essays due in one week. I had planned the term well, and so I knew I would have all of them finished on time: all except the final assignment in the Spiritual Autobiography course—we were to write our *own* spiritual autobiography. A spiritual autobiography tells the story of a person's spiritual life to

him/herself and to others. I had not decided how I would approach this subject, but I am a journal writer and have been for some time. I trusted that I would be able to write something about my life. It was the final weekend before the personal autobiography and three other assignments were due. I had hoped to get to the library by 9 a.m. to begin a full day of work, only to find that the library did not open until 10 a.m. I ended up in Starbuck's for about half an hour drinking coffee and waiting to get to work on my essays. While at Starbuck's I used the extra half-hour of time to write about an experience that was causing me problems. I wrote in a notebook the following journal entry. I eventually handed in the journal entry as my personal spiritual autobiography, with some additional material that explained to the reader the events that I described.

Story: Standing In The Presence

It is Saturday morning, 9:15 a.m. I have just found out that the Stauffer Library doesn't open until ten o'clock. I am at Starbuck's on Princess Street rereading the first few pages of Madeleine L'Engle's book, *A circle of quiet*; the paper on this book is due in two days. She is talking about her quiet place, the brook: I start to cry. Again. This happened yesterday while reading this book and I finally had to stop reading and leave the library—time out to decompress. It happened a week ago while reading Thomas Merton and earlier when researching the essay on Simone Weil. Something about the beauty of well-crafted words that get to the center of meaning; meaning in relation to God. I have two days to finish this essay and I am now fairly certain that I will cry my way through till the completion of the paper. I may as well resign me; once this starts it carries on until it is finished and I have no way of controlling it.

I know this because it has happened before. About three years ago, I had a dream that moved me deeply. When I wrote it out it made me cry. For a week, every time I thought about the dream it made me cry uncontrollably from somewhere deep inside. I called a dear friend who is a spiritual director, and asked if she would listen to me professionally, to help me sort this out. Nancy was taking a course where she had to tape a client session and she asked if she could tape our time together. I agreed and during our session I talked with her for over an hour. Later she provided me with a tape of my conversation. When I listened to it I was

surprised to hear that it was almost incoherent, half sentences, apparent ramblings. At the end of the session I apologized to her for the mishmash I had just delivered. She said it was perfect for her needs; that I had the ability to bypass the intellect and move straight into the subconscious mind, which is why the tape sounded so disjointed. However, after this session I no longer needed to guard my thoughts around this dream. Somehow the telling of it gave me space to accept it into my system, whether I understood it or not.

The first time I experienced uncontrolled crying was ten years ago. In 1997, on Christmas day, my father had a heart attack and died. A week later my brother committed suicide. The combination of these two events left me unhinged. Three months later in March I went to an energy worker who had been recommended by a friend. Although I had had no previous experience with therapy of this kind, my friend Liz explained that thought directs energy patterns in the body and that blocks in energy are the cause of both physical and mental “dis-ease.” I had never seen anyone but my family doctor up to that point in my life, but knew I needed help moving through the grief of these two deaths. Twenty-five years earlier, my other brother, best friend, and first cousin had died all within a year, all in their twenties, all suddenly. I had pushed down emotions concerning these three losses, and kept going with my life. I went to see Anthony Choy, occupational therapist on Maunday Thursday, three days before Easter. In that first session, he told me things about me that startled me with his insight. The next day, Good Friday, I had to sing a song cycle for the service at Trinity United Church. “The Confession Stone” (Fleming, R., 1966) is a set of poems written about the Marys—Magdalene, sister of Martha, and mother of Christ, and their reaction to Jesus on the cross. It is a very intense and moving piece, very appropriate for Good Friday. At the end of the cycle, I sat down in the pew and burst into quiet tears. I slipped out a side door when the service was finished and continued to cry at home for three days, pretty much non-stop.

Because of this, I know that when the crying starts it takes on a life of its own and there is no chance that it can be controlled; it just has to go on until it is finished. I know that it happens when something touches a place so deep within me that I am startled into a flood of tears. The first time, ten years ago on Good Friday, that place brought forth only grief; the traumatizing grief that happens

when a family member dies: grief for my brother's wife and sons who were recreating their lives in shock, and for my mother who had just lost her husband and her oldest son. I understand now that those three days of crying at Easter cracked a space into my soul that once opened, would never close tightly again.

The dream that started the second crying spree happened about six years later in 2003. By then, my twenty-five year marriage had come to an abrupt finish. My family and myself were adjusting to this, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. When the crying started this time, it was in response to a series of dream images that were so beautiful I couldn't contain them.

This time in Starbucks, November, 2007, it is again a response to beauty and truth that is connected in a very real way to who I am. Merton's artistic sensibilities, his quest for goodness, Simone Weil's ascetic connection to God through suffering, Madeleine L'Engle's lovely sense of humor and her image of the burning bush that clears away everything until all that is left is the pure image of God. That which is left is the essence of a person; their passions and beliefs made real in the beauty of a life lived.

Recently I watched a musician friend conduct his 250 choristers in a composition he had written. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he opened his soul to the music and to the room, creating a work of art in a moment in time. I have lived these moments myself, and know that they have been named "peak" experiences. This doesn't really begin to describe the place where they are found: when all of the endless rehearsing of notes and vocal technique combine with poetry and emotions to create something else—something that can't be known in words, but in the experience, leaves an impression on the soul that must be eternal. It happens in an unconscious moment, when you are willing to give everything for beauty.

I have come to understand that these uncontrollable tears are my "burning bush"; my opening into the place where God meets us face to face in the world. The first time I was afraid of it. It felt too deep, too unmanageable; I just wanted to shut it off. The second time, it was the discovery of something wonderful and whole within me that is so ordinary and yet so real that it can only be experienced in a flood of tears. I can't help but feel that these tears in Starbuck's are somehow a bookend to the first experience ten years ago. This time is different because I am

at once aware intellectually and yet still present to the emotion. There is a knowing; that I am here, in this blessed place, on my own terms, dependant on God, but making the rules myself, placing my faith in God, but trusting my own intellect and instincts.

I know that this unusual experience will come again, and I am curious as to what will bring it on the next time. My guess is that in the journey of a soul it will appear as needed, as I am able to place myself more fully in God. For this, I am grateful.

It was interesting to me that after I had written this journal entry, the crying ended as abruptly as it had begun, and I was able to work uninterrupted on my essays for the next few days. I think that in writing out my experience, I was able to name it. I had opened up enough personal space to be able to adequately contain the experience that brought on the tears. I have now learned to let the tears flow when emotion surprises me with tears. A few tears shed consciously, without any attempt to hold them in, means the emotion is allowed to spill out. I can generally name the source very quickly; an experience that triggers a memory, poetry, music, a passage in a book; some encounter with beauty is sure to set me off. But not for long.

Openness and vulnerability is relevant to my practice because I have had a lot of experience teaching and conducting adolescents, and I have raised two children who are now in their twenties. As a parent and an educator it is clear to me that young people struggle with their vulnerability every day. Experiences at school and with friends teach children how to protect themselves from the recess battlefield, from school situations where they are made to feel inadequate, and from family situations that confuse and pierce their heart. As a conductor, I would ask young singers to express themselves in ways that they didn't really understand and that probably threatened the walls they had built around their emotions.

Trust: Opening The Channels

I found that mutual trust between singers and conductor could open channels of communication, providing young singers with an opportunity for personal expression from within the safety of the

choral unit. Jordan (1999) described the barriers to trust as a “shell that thickens and hardens as we look for answers outside of ourselves instead of listening to ourselves” (p. 32). A friend who is a spiritual director told me that even people who have had exemplary parents and home lives have issues that must be addressed. She said that it is her experience that these issues always stem from unfinished business in early childhood. Singing repertoire that connects experience with emotions offers young singers a channel for releasing the negativity that results from unfinished business.

Connecting Spiritually Through Music

To deal with lingering personal issues creatively through singing is practical and appealing. In an article concerning spirituality and music, Boyce-Tillman (2007) named the three ways that music may be used to access the spiritual domain as (a) performing/improvising, (b) composing/improvising, and (c) listening in audience. I would add to this list the lesson and rehearsal situation where teacher and student work on performing, improvising, listening, and sometimes even composing a piece of music. When a lesson/rehearsal engages us physically and consciously, when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable from within that lesson/rehearsal experience, we have created the conditions to be able to “learn deeply” (Palmer, 1997, p. 72). This happened for Rachael and me during the lessons. The change that took place as a result of this connection is described in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Summary: Self-Knowledge

In reading the literature devoted to spirituality and teaching, I realized that self-knowledge lay at the heart of all spiritual learning. Martin Buber’s book *I and Thou* (1970) suggested that self-knowledge is relational, that our perception of the other as “thou” relates directly to how we perceive ourselves. When one can look upon another with reverence, one sees the other and oneself from a divine perspective. This affects all aspects of a relationship. Simone Weil (2001, p. 90) said that all knowledge was gained through a process of attention, where the student trusted

the teacher and the process of learning enough to allow knowledge to come to light *by placing one's attention fully on the question at hand*. "Waiting patiently for the truth of the object to reveal itself" (Tubbs, 2005, p. 300) is not a concept with which we are familiar today. In our world of quick fixes, this type of learning requires too much time and energy. Noddings' (2006) connection of the mind and the imagination to critical thinking offers a different approach to the same idea that Palmer (1993) credited to Socrates; that we must know ourselves if true knowledge is to be attained. Noddings said that her premise of critical thinking was based on the Socratic advice, "know thyself." She made a bold statement that "unexamined lives may well be valuable and worth living, but an education that does not invite such examination may not be worthy of the label, 'education'"(p. 10). To know oneself in the way that Noddings suggests involves connecting one's intellect with one's heart.

In all of the literature that examines self-knowledge, I found the writings of Palmer (1993, 1997) to be most relevant to my thesis topic. Palmer has spent much of his professional life discussing the relationships between self-knowledge, spirituality, and education. His writing on the importance of self-knowledge to teaching was a key component in his examination of effective pedagogy. His definition of self-knowledge involved an exploration of all intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. In other words, the concept of body, mind, and spirit is relevant and essential for self-knowledge to be revealed. According to Palmer (1997), an examination of physical makeup, family background, cultural influence, the effects of human interaction, and love and suffering will undoubtedly offer one a clearer vision of oneself in relation to one's world. Anthony de Mello (1992) said that this process of stripping away all self-illusion leads one "to see at last with a vision that is clear and unclouded by fear and desire. You will know what it means to love" (p. 173). I understand this to mean that if we can recognize the motives that have guided our own past actions and reactions, we may in turn offer a path to understanding the actions and reactions of others. We may gain a sense of compassion for those

whose lives have intersected our own in negative ways. Furthermore, we may wish to emulate those who have influenced our lives in positive ways. Palmer (1997) said, “Identity and integrity are the ... subtle dimensions of the complex, demanding, and life-long process of self-discovery” (p. 4). Palmer goes on to explain, “identity and integrity have as much to do with our shadows and limits, our wounds and our fears, as with our strengths and potentials” (p. 4). He makes it clear that both positive and negative characteristics are necessary for self-discovery. Self-knowledge is often acquired through direct life experiences such as birth, death, marriage, or divorce. These times can heighten self-awareness and can stimulate personal growth as people often seek help when searching for answers to life-situations.

Even though I have never heard anyone express the desire to sing as an opportunity for self-awareness in all of my years of teaching voice, I have observed many personal transformations that occurred in the course of a person’s singing lessons. A lifetime of personal experience and observation told me that an every day experience such as singing could be used to transform lives in positive ways. Examining other teachers’ experience of transformation through singing lessons has confirmed my belief that one can sing one’s life into a freer, healthier, and happier place.

A singing lesson is a place where mutual trust and commitment to growth can flourish. These virtues transform the singing lesson from a secular to a sacred experience. With the introduction of the sacred, respect may turn to reverence and vulnerability can be accepted as a state of being instead of an embarrassing annoyance. Wonder and awe are openly received and wisdom has a place to take hold. One may be surprised into self-knowledge when conditions make it possible.

In my search for literature and relevant resources, although it appears that there is still no professional training in the area of voice and self-knowledge, I have found much to justify an exploration of vocal pedagogy in relation to self-knowledge. The literature that supports the use of voice and self-expression helped me to connect singing to transformative learning. Theory and practice came together in this investigation of self-knowledge through vocal pedagogy.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

When the soul wishes to experience something she throws an image of the experience out before her and enters into her own image. (Meister Eckart)

Research Design

In chapter two, I discuss the methodology I have used to explore my research questions. The research is organized in two phases. In phase one, I sought out the views of four key informants who use singing as a tool for self-knowledge. I used the information collected to help design phase two of the study which involved a series of ten singing lessons with an adult woman who wanted singing lessons for self-expression.

Phase One: Four Perspectives

To answer the research questions I developed a two-phase research plan. In the first phase, I immersed myself in four perspectives; my own, and the perspectives of three other educators who have worked with the voice as a tool for self-knowledge. I received ethics approval from the university to interview three educators who have taken the time to formulate their pedagogy through years of trial and error in private and group sessions with singers. To find the interviewees, I looked for singing teachers who had researched singing and holism. Conversations with my advisor and thesis committee member together with inquiries with other music educators provided me with the people that I chose to interview.

The knowledge I gained from the three key informants deepened my own understanding as I explored three very different approaches to the subject of singing and self-knowledge. Effective use of key informants to discern meaning requires

The underlying assumption is that dialogue and reflection can reveal the essence—the essential, invariant structure or central underlying meaning—of some aspect of shared experience no matter the experience. (Shram, 2006, p. 98)

I transcribed all of the interviews and, with the permission of those interviewed, I used everyone's real name. I sent the key informants the interview questions in advance so that they had an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and ideas before the interview took place. I constructed open-ended questions that would lead into conversation that was propelled forward by the interviewee. In this way I acquired information on the experience of those interviewed. It was important to do so, as there appears to be little formal basis of training for the combined use of singing and self-knowledge. I was able to find literature that pertained separately to the subjects of singing, self-knowledge and spirituality, but it was very difficult to find previous work that combined the three subjects. In her thesis on singing and holism, Joyce (1993) observed:

There is no known source of training for facilitators who use singing in the contexts explored in this study... . It appears that all of the participants in this study developed their skills through life experience and cursory professional training... . This is another area deserving of research and development. (p. 165)

Ann Patteson

Ann Patteson is a voice teacher who completed a Master's thesis titled *Singing a woman's life: How singing lessons transformed the lives of nine women (1999)*. I chose Patteson as an interviewee because of the holistic perspective she had adopted in writing about her work. In reading her thesis, I was interested in the approach she used to help women to reconnect with their bodies and their emotions. In Patteson's voice studio, women found ways to express themselves through songs that were important to them. They used vocalizations to recover an integration of body, mind, and spirit. Patteson also looked at her own singing life; she discussed times that she had felt silenced, and how these had impacted her life.

Identified as a gifted singer at the age of nine years old, she received early vocal training as a chorister, and in her studio practice now, still uses some of the technique she acquired at that

time. Patteson now has a Ph.D. in Education, and is Director of Academic Research at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

We met at my home in early fall and talked for about two hours.

Wendy Lewela Perkins

I first met Wendy at one of her *Soulful Singing* sessions. Having recently moved to the city, I was looking for ways to connect with my new community. Wendy's name had been mentioned to me at least twice as someone who had a unique approach to singing and spirituality. She is a Unitarian minister, with two master's degrees: one in applied psychology, and one in theology. At my first experience of *Soulful Singing*, I was intrigued by her easy leadership style as she moved people from one song to another for two hours of continuous singing. As she guided each song, it began with a unison call-response, moving into harmony, instrumental accompaniment, and rhythmic and melodic ostinatos. As I observed myself and the other participants, it seemed as if we moved together from within the heart of each song, experiencing its own natural climax, and finishing by some sort of internal consensus between the singers. I watched and experienced moments of spontaneous joy in that session. I knew then that I wanted to interview Wendy to find out more about how she had created this approach to singing, and whether she related it to her career as a Unitarian minister. I went to Wendy's home on a beautiful fall day for our interview. We talked for about an hour and a half.

Victoria Moon Joyce

The third person that I interviewed refers to herself as an educator, an artist, and a musician. Victoria Moon Joyce wrote a master's thesis entitled *Singing for our lives: Women creating home through singing* (1993). In this thesis, Joyce interviewed six women who worked with singing and holism in a round-table discussion. I was intrigued by her ideas when I read of her work in Ann Patteson's (1999) thesis, *Singing a woman's life: How singing lessons transformed the lives of nine women* (1999), and I wanted to learn more about Joyce's work after she finished her

master's thesis. She went on to complete a doctorate at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto. Her doctoral thesis was entitled: *Bodies that sing: The formation of singing subjects* (2003). This thesis examined the role that society plays in the formation of the perception of ourselves as singers or non-singers.

Joyce grew up in Scarborough, Ontario. Her grandparents lived nearby, and they sang with her frequently. In this way, singing became a routine event in her life. Other early singing experiences included choir, campfire singing, and singing along with the radio. When she became a professional entertainer, she decided to take formal singing lessons, and at this time, studied to develop a singing technique. From there, she began to take workshops to enhance her experience of music in various community settings, including Indian classical singing, Eastern European singing, improvisation, and music for building community and for personal empowerment.

Another strong influence was Joyce's experience with camping, and with the organization *Outward Bound* that organizes extreme outdoor experiences for personal development. Joyce facilitated a program for *Outward Bound* called *Women of Courage* for women who had experienced intense trauma in their personal lives. Joyce noticed how singing had inadvertently become a component of the course, as the women were surprised by feelings of joy as they sang together. This singing led to a positive transformation in self-esteem. Now, Joyce facilitates many workshops using singing for self-expression and personal transformation. She continues her research work on the topics of singing and self-expression and she teaches at the University of New Brunswick.

My perspective

I then examined my own experience as a student, performer, teacher, and a lover of singing. I reflected on the musical times of my life that have imprinted themselves in my memory, and I noted the transformations that had resulted. Because examining my own perspective involved personal self-discovery I used a heuristic theoretical framework for this reflection. Patton

explained that the heuristic researcher is concerned “with meanings, not measurements, with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior” (p. 107).

A heuristic inquiry is dependent upon the intense involvement of the researcher with the subject being researched. I love Margaret Atwood’s (2005) description of a heuristic inquiry. In explaining her intentions around writing *Negotiating with the dead: Writers on writing* (2005), she said, it is “the type of book such a person might think of beginning, the day after he or she wakes up in the middle of the night and wonders what she’s been up to all this time” (xvii).

This description resonates strongly with my own life: as I careened through midlife, with two children, a dog, a blown up marriage, seven choirs and too many students, I am amazed, grateful, and thrilled to have landed in graduate school at the far end of my musical career. In the past year and a half, I have seized the opportunity to examine the singing/teaching/performing work that I have done for the last thirty years. Mooney (1957) observed that:

Research is a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one’s own self-realization. It can be taken as a way of meeting life with the maximum of stops open to get out of experience its most poignant significance, its most full-throated song. (p. 155)

One of the guidelines of autobiographical study that Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) discussed was that the study should “seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other” (p. 17). I found many ideas that resonated with my own in the interviews with Ann Patteson, Wendy Lewela Perkins, and Victoria Moon Joyce. Their stories carried similar patterns in relation to discovering the joy of singing. Their personal lives were formed in relation to singing and their careers all have a connection to singing and to spirituality. All have explored singing as a vehicle for personal growth. I hope that my story can add to the body of knowledge that is developing in singing and holism, and my wish is that others can benefit from the telling of my experiences and the insights gained.

Looking at the area of self-knowledge in connection with vocal pedagogy has revitalized my commitment to my work and it has reaffirmed to me that my work is my passion. In my exploration of self-expression through singing, I sense that I have found a way to combine my intense love of singing with my desire to learn, and my longing for all things spiritual. I see a path that affirms my gifts, and places them in the service of others. Gregg Levoy (1997) wrote about living life as a calling. He said:

Our personal voice and the larger Voice that wants to speak through us, call it what you will, also speak as one. Where the personal voice and the transpersonal voice coincide—like the thermal cracks that line tectonic plates deep beneath the ocean, pouring forth boiling water and creating life where it wouldn't otherwise be able to exist—life giving energy pours through us into the world. (p. 324)

I have this sense about this research project. I am aware that my personal voice and my larger Voice are connecting as I set these words down on paper. In discussing our work, a voice teacher/singer once said to me, “we are built for singing.” I know that describes me. I am built for singing and for facilitating singing, and I have done so for many groups, many individuals, in a variety of settings. This research has shifted my focus in private lessons and in my choral work as well. New ideas and experiences are combining to offer a richer understanding of the work I am doing. With this understanding comes the realization that a study on self-knowledge has impacted my life personally as well as professionally. Ideas about the relationship of teaching to self-knowledge in Palmer's (1993) book, *To know as we are known* helped to form the purpose of this research. Palmer's concept of knowledge requires us to get into the skin of “the other”—whoever that may be—so deeply that we are known to them as fully as we know them. This is a radical concept in a student/teacher relationship. It requires an extraordinary level of acceptance from both sides. Boundaries and openness are held in place through mutual trust and faith in the process.

Phase Two: The Ten Lessons

After conducting interviews with the three educators who had had experience using singing lessons for the purpose of self-knowledge, I synthesized their ideas and my own. Using the information that I acquired, I planned a series of ten lessons. The ten lessons comprised phase two of the research. I conducted a series of 10 private singing lessons with one adult student who approached me about singing lessons designed specifically for self-expression. I used traditional vocal and spiritual practices combined. I received ethical approval from the university, and then written approval from the student to use these lessons in my research. From now on, I will refer to the student by the pseudonym Rachael. Because the lessons were part of a study, there was no exchange of money between teacher and student. All but one lesson took place in my home and they each lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

I audio-taped each lesson. I made field note entries into my journal immediately after each lesson and again after I listened to the audiotape. I had planned to have Rachael make field notes but that did not work. I listened to lessons one to five and made general observations in my journal of the first five lessons and then I did the same for lessons six to ten. During the lessons, I played portions of Rachael's singing and recorded her comments about her singing.

A Singing Lesson

In this section I describe what happens in a singing lesson, I introduce the singing student, and describe the learning covenant that I wrote for the student and me.

A weekly singing lesson traditionally offers physical exercises to enhance the vocal mechanism as well as work to develop both musical understanding and an emotional connection with the melody and lyrics. Body, mind, and spirit come together in a uniquely personal expression of life. My own experience as a singing teacher told me that the small, manageable framework of a weekly singing lesson might be a rich setting for introducing self-knowledge into an existing structure, and this proved to be the case. The singing studio is a space where self-discovery can

be encouraged and held with respect. I have observed the creation of a personal voice in many student singers, as teacher and student look first at the composer's intentions to express poetry. Then, when the singer connects the music and poetry to his/her own experience, a personal voice is created. The aim in a traditional singing lesson is most often an aesthetic concern—to create the most beautiful, expressive sound that one can produce. In order to do this, the singer must learn how to connect body, mind, and spirit to truly create artistic expression. This combination of the intellect, emotions, and spirit is generally present in a traditional singing lesson when the student and teacher use the lesson time to connect consciously with these elements. In the process of connecting the lyrics and melody of a song to one's own life, the student is presented each session with the opportunity to be an artist.

My belief that we can all develop the skills of the artist to find our personal voice was challenged in the ten lessons. Murray Schafer (2002) spoke of the purpose of art in a way that surprised me with its extreme language, at the same time explaining logically the practical application of art in every day life. He said:

First, Exaltation. Let us speak of that. The change that occurs when we are lifted out of the tight little cages of our daily realities. To be hurled beyond our limits into the cosmos of magnificent forces, to fly into the beams of these forces and if we blink, to have our eyes and ears and senses tripped open against the mind's will to the sensational and the miraculous. To feel those forces explode in our faces, against our bodies, breaking all encrustations and releasing us with a wild fluttering of freedom. Let us speak of that. How everything becomes new. And if we return to our daily routines, they are no longer routines, but scintillate and have become magnificent by our sensing them with fresh eyes and noses and minds and bodies. Let us speak of this exaltation, which has driven us out of ourselves to experience the life we have missed or only vaguely sensed, even resisted. This must be the first purpose of art. To

effect a change in our existential condition. This is the first purpose. To change us. It is a noble aim, a divine aim. (p. 83)

Daily, routine use of Schafer's radical view of the purpose of art would demand one to explore to the very edges of possibility all personal connections with the music of our lives. It is the way for us to reconnect with the brilliant and glorious that is present in every moment of every life. When I let go of the idea that only the most gifted voices are worthy of artistic practice, I open myself to the possibility that daily routine can be transformed; experienced with "fresh eyes and noses and minds and bodies." In a singing lesson, it is possible to take small steps towards having "our eyes and ears and senses tripped open against the mind's will to the sensational and the miraculous" (Schafer, 2000, p. 83). Schafer's words evoke states of being that are of mythical proportions. When I have the courage to engage in my life at this level, every moment could have the potential for exultation. A phrase in a song could trigger loving memories of someone. When I accept the surge of emotion connected to this image, I have engaged the process of illuminating my feelings and beliefs around the memory. When this occurs, the body could be free to "sing them out"; releasing feelings and beliefs that are blocking freedom, at a rate that is safe and controlled *through* my awareness. In this way, I live more fully present to my natural responses, aware that strong emotion is manageable, and so free to come and go in my system. I have expanded my capacity for joyful living, and I am more able to respond directly, without unconscious reactivity to any situation. Life becomes more adventurous, and more orderly at the same time.

In discussing music's ability to create order, Storr (1992) cited the great artist Yehudi Menuhin who said:

Music creates order out of chaos; for rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent; melody imposes continuity upon the disjointed, and harmony imposes compatibility upon the incongruous. (p. 33)

People are surprised regularly with aspects of the divergent, disjointed, and incongruous aspects of life. It is more rare to experience art as “exaltation” in the way that Shafer describes it. I was interested in exploring the glory of Schafer’s artistic vision, and the creation of order of Menuhin’s vision. I hoped to engage both in the ten lessons.

The Student Appears

At the same time that I was forming my ideas for this research, I was also beginning a studio practice once again, after a year’s sabbatical from teaching voice privately. On a day in June, I met with a woman who told me that she wanted to take lessons “to find her own voice” as a vehicle for self-awareness. I had already begun to write a research proposal initially entitled *Finding your own voice: Developing Self-Knowledge Through Vocal Pedagogy* and was somewhat surprised at the synchronicity of the meeting with this student. After some reflection, I contacted this woman and asked her if she would be willing to be part of a research project that would look at pedagogy emerging from a series of voice lessons designed around self-knowledge. She agreed, and her lessons formed the experiential portion of my study.

Meet Rachael

Rachael began piano lessons as a child, and was devoted enough to her studies to receive her Grade nine piano diploma from the Royal Conservatory of Music. She sang in choir all through her school years, and remembered this experience with a mixture of pleasure and distaste. She loved to sing, but felt that choir was not a place where she could express herself as an individual.

I believe that it is significant that this person asked specifically for the lessons to center on finding her own personal voice. Years of teaching songs to students in singing lessons has confirmed for me the idea of tacit learning: I have often observed the connection between repertoire choice and self-identity. In a survey on adult informal learning, Livingstone (2000) said:

Explicit informal learning is distinguished from everyday perceptions, general socialization and more tacit informal learning by people's own conscious identification of the activity as significant learning. The important criteria that distinguish explicit informal learning are the retrospective recognition of both a new significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired on your own initiative and also recognition of the process. (p. 4)

The singing lessons with Rachael were an explicit informal learning activity that involved singing and self-knowledge. The lessons were based on personal and conscious choice of criteria, mutually decided by student and facilitator. The intent of the learning was clear and focused and the methods used for acquiring self-knowledge were common to both spiritual and vocal practice. Tacit informal learning was also present in the ten lessons. Tacit learning takes place in every singing lesson as students learn to develop posture and breathing habits that enhance not only their singing, but also their health and well-being. Singing exercises on vowels connect us to sound in an abstract way; when words are eliminated from the singing process, students are free to listen to the pure tone of their voice. Learning a song strengthens memory capacity and the creation of beauty enhances self-esteem. Singing provides one with a direct physical experience of one's body connected to one's mind. I looked at some of these facets of tacit learning that take place regularly in a singing lesson and addressed them formally as explicit learning. Repertoire choices were explored as emotional connections to life experiences.

Spiritual Practice in the Singing Lesson: The Covenant

Before I begin singing lessons with anyone, I always meet with them, discuss their voice, their musical background, and the organizational parts of my studio practice. Because of the spiritual component of this research, I adopted a "learning covenant," as described by Wickett (2000), to establish the necessary criteria for the ten lessons. She described a covenant as follows:

Covenants are similar to contracts in many ways, but they differ in that covenants always include a strong spiritual dimension, especially the capacity to relate, which is innate to humanity. The learning covenant, like a contract, involves establishing learning objectives, naming the strategies to be used for accomplishing these objectives, setting time lines, identifying resources, and outlining criteria for evaluation. (Wickett, p. 41)

This model inferred a depth of respect for the learner and for the process of learning that appeared to be more appropriate to a study that involved singing and self-knowledge. The traditional framework of a singing lesson that allows for vocal warm-up and repertoire study was still used. However, I deepened my level of commitment and intention when I wrote out the following covenant:

1. In the spirit of hospitality and preparation, I intend to compose a letter to the student, asking her to describe any specific objectives she may have for the sessions. I will also ensure her that all material discussed in the sessions is confidential.
2. In the spirit of trust, I will invite the student to confirm in writing our mutual intentions for the lessons.
3. In order to create a “learning covenant,” (Wickett, 2000) the student and I will discuss her objectives at the first lesson. Together we will talk about the strategies we would use, and I will make certain that the student is comfortable with the process I plan to use.
4. In the spirit of commitment, I will support my student in the learning process in any way that seems reasonable and effective during the lesson process.
5. As in Palmer’s (1997) idea that “a space should welcome both silence and speech” (p. 77), I will invite a place in each session for silence, and in the framework of the lesson, I will endeavor to allow silence to occur when it seems natural and appropriate.
6. In the spirit of respect, I will make every effort to create an atmosphere where the student and the learning are honored.

7. To facilitate “teaching as occasioning” (Davis, 2004, p. 163), I endeavor to remain open to all possibilities even when I am uncomfortable in the learning process. The idea of “teaching as occasioning” implies aspects of improvisation—a musical concept that involves composing “on the spot”; allowing musical ideas to form around an inherent structure. In this way, I hope to minimize any control I may be inclined to impose on the lesson formation process.

8. In the spirit of clarity, I intend to ask open-ended questions as they arise throughout the session. “It means no advice, no over identification—questions that do not promote the questioner’s agenda, but help the focus person discover wisdom within” (Palmer, 2007, p. 158).

9. As I observed in a Montessori demonstration of *Godly play*, (a pedagogy designed to introduce biblical stories to young children) I will begin questions with phrases such as “I wonder,” thus stimulating an imaginative response instead of a logical response.

10. Using the ideas from *A whole new mind* (Pink, 2005), I will allow elements of design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning to dance through the session; not in a prescribed way, but instead as a means to enlighten, enrich, deepen, and lighten the flow of the session, depending on what is needed at the time.

Writing the covenant helped me to focus my intentions. It also gave me the sense that the lessons were part of a sacred trust between the student and me. I did my best to adhere to these commitments. I was often successful, and sometimes failed miserably in terms of patience, judgment, and open-ended questioning.

I incorporated aspects of traditional spiritual practice, such as a ritual that signaled the beginning of the session, thus acknowledging the presence of the sacred. Before every session, I always had a candle burning. We began each session with a cup of tea, and we always sat at the dining room table. Where a traditional lesson would involve direct instruction by the teacher, I made an effort

to engage a conversational approach, where student and teacher discuss equally the process that is occurring. Peters (1968) discussed a conversational approach in the following way:

The point is to create a common world to which all bring their distinctive contributions. By participating in such a shared experience much is learnt, though no one sets out to teach anyone anything. And one of the things that is learnt is to see the world from the viewpoint of another whose perspective is very different. (p. 21)

Engaging in conversation at the beginning of each lesson provided both Rachael and me an opportunity to make a transition from what we had been doing previously, and settle into the rhythm of the lesson. Dialogue in the main part of the lesson gave Rachael a voice in the lesson's proceedings. Because she felt free enough to comment on techniques, I had the opportunity to shift what I was doing or explain why my method was important to the singing process.

The Singing Lesson: Art as Experience

Dewey (1934/1980) discussed the natural ebb and flow, push and pull of life situations and their relationship to an aesthetic life experience. He said, "Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives" (p. 13). He explained that this natural rise and fall of tension in a life is an aesthetic experience. In recognizing and meeting life's challenges, life itself changes into something larger, more significant. This process goes to "the roots of the esthetic in experience" (p. 16).

To recognize and meet life's challenges is to seize opportunities as life presents them. In a traditional lesson, student and teacher together are attentive to the singer's feelings, as beautiful expressive singing is dependant upon an authentic connection with the singer's emotional state. The singer uses this emotion, combined with his/her intellect to interpret music and lyrics effectively. Because so many musical and intellectual decisions are being made all at once, artists

use their intuition and tacit knowing for many artistic decisions. I have always thought that an exceptional singing lesson could be called a work of art; inspiration and intellect come together to create a beautiful expression of life that can leave a lasting impression on teacher and student.

Recording the Sessions

I audio taped every lesson and used the audiotape in the lesson time to reaffirm with Rachael the change in vocal facility that occurred as the lessons progressed. I listened to the audiotape after each session, and then I listened to portions of the audio sessions from week one to week five, and again from week five to week nine. As I reviewed the tapes, I was able to hear which strategies were effective and which strategies needed to change. Reviewing the tapes enabled me to get a better sense of what worked for Rachael and what caused her stress. I would plan my next session, always informed by careful examination of the last session. In this way, the research fed practice and the practice fed the research on a weekly basis.

Journaling: Mine and Rachael's

I kept a journal of every session. My idea for journaling through the lesson came after I had kept a commonplace book in a master's course called *The art of teaching*, given by Dr. Katharine Smithrim at the Faculty of Education, Queens University, in July 2008. A commonplace book is a journal in which someone can keep all information relevant to a topic: articles, pictures, traditional journal entries, anything that is relevant to the topic may be kept in a commonplace book. Writing about the classes connected me intimately to the work I was doing in the course. As I have kept a personal journal for years, I found the writing that I did for *The art of teaching* course became a natural synthesis of work and personal growth. The following is an excerpt from my commonplace book:

My understanding of this journal is that it be used to synthesize for us the ideas that are presented in class. That was my initial intent when I began. What has actually happened in the process is something a bit different, and I wonder if I

can put it into words. In writing down whatever happens in class, I can't help but notice the many connections; from the literature, the art activities, things that happen or are said—so many resonances in my own life. In all of the time that I have taken courses, this has never happened this way. An image is taken in during class, and it ends up in my dreams. In synthesizing the material and the ideas in class, my life (personally and professionally) is being woven inseparably into the process. Like an unexpected thread of colour that appears in a fabric, making it more beautiful, more interesting. (Commonplace Book, July 16, 2008)

Kaiser (1981) discussed Progoff's ideas concerning the function of journaling in personal growth.

He said that in studying creative people's journals, such as Dostoevsky and Nin, the journal became "a vehicle for further creativity" (p. 76). He continued:

But I found that a good many other journals were just diaries: without a project to be done, people's diaries just went around in circles. I looked at other journals, notably those of Dostoevsky and Anaïs Nin, and I could see that, for them, the journal was a vehicle that led to further creativity. *Without a project*—that was the key that opened the door for Progoff. He'd already seen in his own case that a journal could lead somewhere for him if he had a problem. But what about everyone else in the world? What projects do they have? The answer came to Progoff in a flash, the result of all his previous reading, from Lao-tzu to Smuts to Buber: everyone has a life and that life must be his or her great work of art. (p. 76)

The idea that one's life is a unique, beautiful work of art resonated strongly with my own ideas and with my reading (Johnston, 2003). I was anxious to incorporate journaling into the ten lessons. I am not sure if it has been used in singing lessons before: I have not heard of it being used before and in the interviews with Ann Patteson and Moon Joyce, they both indicated that they had not heard of journaling connected to singing.

Rachael was able to write down observations during the session, but was not willing to do so after we were finished singing for the day. I wrote extensively about the lessons after each session, and

I listened repeatedly to the recorded lessons. The combination of listening plus reflection on the journal entries helped me to identify creative and communicative blocks that occurred during the sessions. I was also able to detect moments of inspiration.

The use of interviews to inform practice was integral to the success of the ten lessons I gave to Rachael. The three women that I interviewed had diverse ideas surrounding the way they structured their lessons and workshops, connected by the holistic approach to their work. Connecting spiritual practice to vocal technique proved to be a natural transition that flowed easily in the sessions and recognition of the singing lesson as an artistic experience enabled Rachael to see herself differently.

Data Analysis

The data set for phase one of this research included transcriptions of the three recorded interviews. Once I had transcribed the interviews, I synthesized the findings with my own perspective, using Atlas.ti, a computer program for data analysis. The analysis was organized into categories that emerged and I used the synthesized ideas to form some of the intents for the ten lessons.

The data set for phase two included the audio recordings of the ten lessons and my field notes. After each lesson I made field notes in my journal. I then listened to the recorded lesson and made further observations. After week five, I listened to portions of the first five lessons and made field notes again. When the lessons were finished, I listened to the final five lessons and made field notes. The field notes related to anything that pertained to the three research questions. By adopting the practice of making field notes immediately following each lesson I was able to reflect immediately on the main events that were noteworthy in each lesson, and use these observations to construct the next lesson. Patton (2002) explained the importance of making field notes immediately after an interview:

This period after an interview or observation is a critical time of reflection and elaboration. It is a time of quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable, and authentic. (p. 384)

I then transcribed relevant sections of the ten lessons. The transcriptions and field notes relating to the lessons were then coded and sorted using ATLAS.ti (1997). In this way, I was able to identify patterns and themes that emerged across the data as they related to specific research questions. Themes and patterns were identified as emergent categories and from these categories I recognized and described the teaching strategies that related to theories of emotional clearing and transformation.

In the following chapter, I discuss the interviews I conducted with the three women whose work involves a holistic approach to singing. I also provide autobiographical material concerning my own life; formative circumstance and experience that I believe to be relevant to the topic of singing and self-knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE: SINGING IS FOR EVERYONE

*I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (Whitman)*

The Four Perspectives on Singing and Self-Knowledge

The three interviews with singing teachers gave me many ideas to take into the ten singing lessons. To reference the transcript material, I quote those interviewed using T to mean transcript, the first initial of their last name, and the page of the transcript: for example, (T P 1) for Ann Patteson, page 1.

Ann Patteson: You Call It Art, I Call It Life

Ann is a voice teacher and art therapist whose personal and professional experiences led her to write a master's thesis entitled *Singing a woman's life: How singing lessons transformed the lives of nine women* (1999). She then went on to complete a Ph.D thesis entitled *Present moments, present lives: Teacher transformation through art making* (2004). We met in my home for an hour and a half, and in that time, discussed her journey from being identified as a young, talented singer, through her experience as a student, and then as a teacher. As a teacher, she noticed that many women came to her who expressed the idea that they wanted to sing but did not think that they could. From Ann, I heard much about establishing a student/teacher relationship that is built on trust and mutual sharing. In describing this in a lesson situation she explained:

A person comes in and I usually spend some time reconnecting: finding out where they're at and sharing my life. Because I find it is a trust situation, and I've learned so much lately from First Nations people. Setting up that relationship and re-establishing it every time you meet. It's so important—the relationship is all-important. And this is something I've intuited through many singing lessons. (T P 4)

Throughout the interview, the words safety and trust arose in almost every question I asked. Ann spoke of the importance of creating a different energy around the lesson time. She described the singing lesson as a “holistic experience: that you have to enter into a kind of space that [is] conducive to singing well” (T P 1). The importance of offering positive encouragement, patience, compassion, understanding, acceptance, laughter: These are the essential components of every lesson that will allow the student a safe place to explore self-expression in their singing.

From this initial place of empathy, Ann works with a very traditional pedagogy. She said, “you have to know how to control the breath, support the sound, take the tension off the throat, focus it for different ranges” (T P 12) She teaches all of the technique you would expect in a singing lesson. To me, the difference between Ann’s lessons as she described them, and traditional singing lessons, is that her emphasis on personal growth and her commitment to honouring each person are intentional components of her pedagogy. Because of this, she said that students “reconnected with their body and their emotions through singing and I found that very exciting”. (T P 2)

She talked about positive early experiences that drew her to performing and studying singing. Early choral experiences were very positive and she still uses portions of that training to this day. She has discarded ideas of perfectionism in singing. She said, “I did study voice at university for awhile and found it to be a hyper-critical environment. It seemed to be about finding critical things to say instead of supportive things to say”. (T P 8)

Her career as a researcher has brought her into close contact with Aboriginal communities, and this has deeply affected her views on the connection between teaching and spirituality. She told me of a recent discussion she had with First Nations people in Northern Alberta. She said:

Whenever I talk about art they will always stop me short—and this will be the title of an article I am writing—you call it art, I call it life. And so vocal expression and expression through art—

they're just woven through life, they're not compartmentalized the way we do with the arts... . We have become very good at shutting people up. Only a select few have good voices is our theory, and it's important to be a star. If you can't obtain that measure, then why even try. It seems not to be valued. (T P 18)

Ann spoke about the potential for abuse in the traditional singing lesson: how that affected her personally, and what she has observed from singers who have come to her. She described the importance of one teacher in her own life—a United Church minister who taught singing lessons in a way that changed her own approach to teaching. She said, “ She inspired me to start teaching in a different way; in a way that I felt always, all my life was the best way to teach. I felt having her as a mentor helped me to be courageous about that” (T P 2). In these lessons, Ann explained that her mentor “approached life as a spiritual journey, and singing lessons as one expression of that journey” (T P 2).

Ann used the phrase “joyous singing” (T P 5) to describe the intended outcome for her lessons. To accomplish this, the relationship between herself and her students is fundamental: she looks deeply at each person, teaching traditional vocal methods to “arrive at the place where they feel more integrated” (T P 12). Ann continues to grow personally as she explores First Nations attitudes around performance as sharing, and artistic expression as a community endeavour.

Wendy Lewela Perkins: You Can't Plan For Beauty

My second interview was with Wendy Lewela Perkins, who facilitates a group that she founded in 2002, called *Soulful Singing*. She is a Unitarian minister and a musician. I interviewed Wendy for this research because of her unusual spiritual connection to singing, and because I was intrigued by the way she facilitated her sessions. I have been to *Soulful Singing* a few times since arriving in Kingston, and have always enjoyed the freedom and improvisatory quality of the sessions. She advertises that you can come to the sessions, no matter what musical experience you have. The session has a minimal cost and you never know who will be there. The first time I

went I was struck by the looks of joy on the faces of everyone singing. Now, I will attend a session of *Soulful Singing* when I feel that my creativity has become sluggish. I always feel revitalized by the end of a session.

One Sunday was a particularly fine singing day and I recorded the experience in my journal when I got home that day. The following is my journal entry about this experience:

We are in a yoga center, with the chairs positioned around a large, vibrantly coloured mandala painted on the floor. Wendy begins to sing very gently. We join in. Many many repetitions of the same melody. Four of us singing in unison with her. I am surprised to discover that I have a lot of phlegm in my throat and cannot produce a clear tone. I keep singing gently, and the voice clears. Singing in unison quickly moves to harmony. Then the voices begin a gentle but sure dance around each other, sometimes touching, sometimes moving in different directions, always coming back to a sense of harmony or unity. A song flows naturally into another song. Each consecutive song takes on a life of its own, growing in dynamic. Someone is dancing, someone grabs a shaker, someone else a small drum. Voices swell and lighten in some synchronicity that would not be pinned down, ever shifting as the melodies spin unrehearsed around the room. A thread of a melody becomes stronger and the beat recedes. We are suspending our voices around an invisible clothesline of sound; barely moving the pitch, sensing that someone will move this way or that way, responding to each move. Words are now gone and the sound is being hung on vowels. Someone starts playing with the sound of the vowels, shaping them with mouth and tongue—overtone singing breaks in. Resonance fills the room and play takes us over as we throw out new sounds and mix them all up together into each other's sounds. Then it melts down into silence.

A large, full pause.

Wendy makes a funny noise with her mouth. Someone joins in. Fun fills the room as we cackle, hoot, howl, fill up the space until laughter breaks in. How could it not? We ride the laughter until it settles down to another lull.

Silence

Then a new song emerges. Listen, sing back, listen, sing back. Then we're off again on a new song tangent. We let it take us where it wants to go. This goes on for two hours. At the ending, we are invited to sing each other's names. In delight, with love and joyful honouring, each spirit is held in sound-light that is almost too much to receive. As a name is sung, the room is vibrating with clear joy.

I have sung myself today, with skilled guidance from within a circle of song. In doing so, I have become the blessing, the one who blesses, and the one who is blessed.

I have been to Wendy's sessions before, but it had never really been quite like what I experienced that morning. It was a pleasure to write this entry out in my journal when I returned to my home that day.

Wendy has been facilitating *Soulful Singing* for six years—since 2002. She has a master's degree in Psychology, and a master's degree in Theology, and singing, particularly *Soulful Singing* has become the primary way that she makes her living. "It's the best thing I have ever done," (T L P 20) she said in our interview. The pleasure in her voice literally spilled out of her as she talked about *Soulful Singing*. About an hour into our interview session, she said, "I think there's so much to say Marie! Oh my God where do I start? Do you have questions?" (T LP 10) Wendy had such a sense of delight in all of her descriptions of her work that I asked her if she considered *Soulful singing* to be a calling. She responded, "Absolutely" (T: LP 17). She explained that her ministry was not connected to a church, but instead took place in her living room, and in other places where she facilitated groups of *Soulful Singing*. She said:

We need pockets everywhere of that kind of real connection. We need to learn to lead ourselves and to understand ourselves and our spirit. We need it all over the place, I think. That's really evangelical. But that's part of me, and that's where the calling comes from: what we do here, and the other groups that I do—it

is a kind of—hopefully it’s like a springboard for people’s lives,
you know (T: LP 17)?

Wendy described her early experiences in singing as being informal and fun: for example, singing in the stairwell of the Psychology building at the University of Waterloo, while attending classes there. While she was enjoying these early singing experiences, something about the music and the experience registered as more than just fun:

It was my own engagement that created this state of connection and awareness. And, I think, having done meditation, really, having those experiences...this connects me more deeply with myself and more profoundly with that which animates the world. I don’t need to have names for that...I feel it very, very strongly...especially in singing with others. (T LP 2)

Experiences singing Taizé (liturgical chants from the Taizé Christian community) with other singers also revealed a sense that “we are creating something that is for us and beyond us: how beautiful and powerful that is” (T LP 4).

Wendy brings her experience with counseling, plus her ministerial skills into her facilitation of *Soulful Singing*. As she explained:

It’s also realizing where people’s struggles are, and how to bring some sort of relief that will help them open up a little. I don’t need them to share with me, it’s not about that. It’s about, they open up to themselves and places in them and they become more real. Isn’t that what we all want? You know, to be authentic and true to ourselves and to know ourselves a little better and to follow our hearts, our deep longing. And so for me, it is church. I would never say that. I would never advertise that. (T LP 19)

Since beginning in 2001, Wendy has made a few adjustments to *Soulful Singing* that are designed to encourage a sense of sacred space. She has changed the time of the meetings from daytime to evening, because, she said “in the evening singing, it is dark, and it’s that coming into a sacred

place, a quiet place” (T LP 10). She moves people into a contemplative state of mind by focusing the energy of the group before the singing begins. She described this as follows:

And you know sometimes there’s a lot of chatting at the very beginning, and sometimes there’s not. I always try— if there’s what I perceive as too much chatting— I don’t mean too much but you know—then I try to do my little *homilette*. There’s a *homilette* every week, and people say, oh it’s a nice reflection, but I think of it as a sermon, I think of it as a very short one to two minute sermon. I very rarely prepare something in advance. I typically want to hear what people are talking about as they’re coming in ... and then I take the mood or intuit the way people feel and I respond to that. (T LP 10)

Wendy uses this sacred space she has created to bring people together in a circle of song, where people are free to participate or remain silent and where every voice is beautiful and powerful in its own right. I have felt the power of this type of expression as people rise to their feet while they are singing or connect into rhythms and melodies that other singers are bringing to the song. Inhibition is tossed aside as singers respond to each other musically. I have a refrigerator magnet that says “Sing as if no one is listening”. To me, this is the paradox of *Soulful Singing*, because the permission to sing ourselves—as we truly are—gives us the ability to listen so intently to other singers that we can respond in the moment. I discovered that for me, this combination of community and permission to improvise is an avenue to creativity that had never been opened so freely in my life as an artist. When I spoke to Wendy about the powerful energy created while singing in her group, she said:

For me it really is medicinal. It’s like a concoction that is inside of me that is with me all the time. It’s like I don’t need to take it from any other place. That’s the power. It’s not like you have to get it from the doctor, or the homeopath, and it’s like a vial. It’s that the medicine is inside of you. And the songs are a symbol of that medicine. (T LP 8)

There is a great sense of empowerment for us all in the idea that each of us has the ability to cure “what ails us” by accessing our own inner resources. Wendy has found a unique way to combine her call to ministry, her musical creativity, and her organizational skills to provide herself with meaningful work and to enhance the lives of everyone who participates in her joyful musical circles.

Victoria Moon Joyce: Open, Present, and Responsive

The third interview was conducted by phone with Victoria Moon Joyce, who lives in Fredericton New Brunswick, teaches at the University of Fredericton, and conducts workshops on singing and self-knowledge. For her Master’s thesis (1993), Joyce interviewed six facilitators of workshops and private studios who used singing as a means of empowerment. I used many of her ideas concerning the transformative power of singing in the ten lessons with Rachael. She discussed singing as a form of play, and gave concrete examples of the way she structures her workshops to make the most of playful opportunities as they present themselves.

Joyce spoke of the resilience of the human spirit despite the tragedies people encounter as they move through their lives. She spoke of facilitating an *Outward Bound* program called *Women of Courage*. The women who took the course had survived violence and trauma and were hoping to make significant changes in their lives. She found that

with this group, the singing took on another dimension. I found it so deep and profound, the effect was so noticeable, that it became almost a component of the course. Many of the women talked about how important it was to them. (T J 1)

Joyce described the way that simple, playful songs sung around the campfire offered these traumatized women a chance “to make some play and be together, to play joyfully and have fun” (T J 1). Because of the painful experiences that these women had been through, playfulness was not something that they had experienced for a while and singing became a way for them to bring it back into their lives. Joyce described the reaction of one woman who burst into tears while

singing, and then said, “Is this what joy is? I’d never experienced it; the feeling is strange to me” (T J 2). Joyce’s work in the prisons has shown her that singing can offer a break from the degrading reality of incarceration. She said that singing allowed female inmates “to have a humanizing experience, to make beauty, to create song, to lift their spirits and feel more whole” (T J 11).

Whatever workshop she is facilitating, Joyce begins by “disinhibiting” (T J 15) group members with a series of exercises designed to release any anxiety they may be feeling about singing. Name games, vowel exercises, soundscapes, toning—she uses whatever she thinks may work for the specific people in front of her at the time. She then works with the group in a state that she describes as “relaxed, open and present” (T J 12). She explained that this is a state of being, where once there, she can respond in the moment to the action taking place in the workshop:

I try to take care of myself; make sure that I am rested and can be present to what’s going on. The energy that’s in the group—is this a good time to sing something? And I have all of my stuff with me—a great big bag full of music, little rhythm instruments, and I am ready to do whatever at the moment. There is an intuitive element to my teaching, I need to be responsive to the energy of the moment”. (T J 22)

In discussing her earliest personal experiences of singing, Joyce explained how she used singing in a therapeutic sense. She said:

I used to sing on my own as a child to comfort myself. I grew up in a home where I would often sing to comfort myself, or sing myself to sleep. Or if things were going on that I didn’t want to hear it... you know, like the person who plugs their ears and goes “LAH LAH LAH LAH LAH... .(T J 30)

Joyce discussed the idea of singing and holism, suggesting that singing is a way to make us whole again. She spoke about singing as providing a “safe container for emotion” (T J 7). This container

becomes a place where body, mind, and spirit can come together in an integrated experience. She said:

My friend says that trauma fragments us: violence, trauma and stress. It splits us up. We become talking heads. We lose all connection with our bodies. We forget to breathe. We do things that are destructive to ourselves. All these things are about disconnect. So when we do anything to reconnect, we are moving towards wholeness, holism, integrity, and singing, because it's a holistic thing, it's one of those things that allows that to happen—allows us to once again become whole. (T: J 35)

Joyce explained that the choice of song isn't as important to her as the physical act of singing; that singers will engage as they can, and that this is enough to begin a process of healing.

According to Joyce:

Self-expression is about healing, self-knowledge is about healing: Singing is a pleasurable and fun way for people to make beauty. We are musical beings. Assume there are always people who have experienced deep loss, work that sucks soul out of you...If you present the opportunity [to sing] in a safe context, if it is irresistible, people will engage as they can. (T J 4)

Joyce's techniques empower the singer to feel confident enough to express herself through song, poetry, vocalization of vowels: whatever avenue appears to be right for the singer. I was intrigued by her use of the voice to make dialogue without using words. She described an activity where she invites two people to face each other, then one of the pair begins a wordless conversation through sound. She spoke further about this:

I've had them converse by taking turns. So they face each other and begin by holding each other's forearms, like in throat-singing position. One person has the opportunity to close their eyes and they can vocalize, or they can tone, or they can sing the song of their soul. And so they just let it come out. There's no

judging, it's just improvisation, pure flow of consciousness,
being present in the moment. And then when it's done, it's done,
and the next person has an opportunity. And we talk about that.

(T J 26-27)

Joyce has devoted a lifetime of study to enhancing women's lives through the power of communal song. Her vast experience enables her to change her course of action as she is working with a group, always remaining flexible to their specific needs. She uses singing in a variety of inspired settings and unusual ways. She brings joy back into lives that have forgotten that joy exists in the world. I am inspired and moved by this work.

My Own Perspective: Built For Singing

My personal and professional life has always merged; music and spirituality have directed all of my major life experiences—the highs and the lows—for as long as I can remember. I grew up in a conservative Catholic home, where God the Father was male and authoritarian, God the Son died for me on the cross, and the Holy Ghost was as much a mystery to me as any other ghost might be. Crucifixes, the sacred heart of Jesus, and the martyrdom of the saints— as a child, these were everyday images. My mother had a statue of the Jesuit martyr, Jean de Brebeuf tied to a stake with his eyes gouged out: It stood guard on top of our TV while the family watched *Lawrence Welk*, *The Ed Sullivan Show* or *Father Knows Best*. When I think about this now, I am amazed to look back and realize what my child-self understood to be “normal.”

Within the framework of an Irish Catholic home, my mother made sure that I had piano lessons. From the very beginning of my study, at age six, I progressed quickly through the Royal Conservatory graded program. My mother also made sure that all family members sang—in church, in duets and trios, and for family and community gatherings. I will always be grateful for this, because it made me familiar with performance at a very early age and I assumed that it was something that was natural and easy to do.

My Catholic education merged with my musical education with the weekly singing of Gregorian chant (often in Latin), hymns, parts of the mass at church. I learned to love participating in the ritual of the mass, singing at every chance. The priest led the chant, and the choir and congregation sang in response—invariably out of tune, but no matter, I still loved it. At 18 years of age, I left home for university and stopped going to church. I returned when I had a family of my own to raise and felt that they should experience a formal religious education. When I did return with my family, it was to the United Church.

While at university, I studied singing, and sang in a wonderful choir. We sang much of the same text I had learned in church as a child—the mass parts, the Magnificat, various Ave Marias and Stabat Maters: In the second week of university, I was moved from the large choir to a small chamber group that toured North America. In the first rehearsal with this group, the director asked me to sight-sing a solo that was part of a contemporary composition of the Isaiah text:

Violence shall be no more heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within its borders.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad;

the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose.

There shall be peace (Isaiah: 35, 1-2).

I will never forget the exhilarating experience of sight-reading a difficult passage of music successfully. I sang this solo in the first choir concert of the season and in New York when the choir toured in November of the same year. I loved the physical experience of choral harmony, either polyphonic or homophonic, and I still feel that same pleasure now when I direct or sing with a choir. I always feel more alive when singing this music and I feel deeply connected to others when I sing in a choir as opposed to singing solo repertoire. My experience of choir in university was the beginning of a passion that has continued to this day.

When I returned to church in my 30s, I did so as a soloist in a very fine United Church and have been attending the United Church ever since. I do not miss the Catholic Church. When I began to

attend United Church services, I appreciated the democratic nature of the church, where lay people have a voice in forming church policy. I welcomed the questions that the United Church faced directly; questions about gender equality, gay and lesbian rights, social justice issues that were not to be mentioned in the Catholic Church.

Having said this, I must also acknowledge that Catholic ritual offered me my first lessons in embodied knowledge. The practice of the mass is designed to connect body, mind, and spirit. For example, when you walk into a Catholic church, you cross yourself with holy water from a container at the back of the church. The bread and wine are consumed at every mass, and participants are reminded at every mass that this is the real body and blood of Christ. The ringing of bells and the perfume of incense engages our senses at every mass, whether it is a small service in the middle of the week, or an elaborate Christmas or Easter service. Wooden kneelers are always present in a Catholic church, because you are required to kneel many times in a typical mass service. In holy week (the week before Easter Sunday), I remember having sore knees, as there is much kneeling through all of the holy week services, especially Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I have always been a kinesthetic learner, and I suspect that this tendency began with the observance of church ritual.

Through years of studying and teaching vocal technique, I have formed my ideas about effective pedagogy. I have found imagery and physical movement very useful for learning the technical aspects of singing. I have searched for ways to engage the whole body in the act of singing. I use a lot of questions in a typical singing lesson, directing the student to experiment with posture alignment, breath support, and resonance capacity, to find the physical sensation that works best for the student. I guide the student to reach his or her own conclusions about the efficiency of their production in relation to their beauty of tone. In 2005, I attended a summer course at the Voicecare Institute, which is part of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. A movement instructor named Babette Lightner talked about a concept that she called an *anatomy*

of wholeness. She worked with us individually and in groups to demonstrate her ideas, and the choral technician worked with individuals (including me) to help us activate the principles of wholeness anatomy. Lightner based her instruction on her work with David Gorman, a former Alexander technician. The following is a brief description of his ideas:

We are a pre-sprung, elastic suspension system, and an adaptive coordinating system. Because of this, we are always the perfect coordination of whatever we are up to in any given moment. Consequently, we are designed to function with ease, freedom and flexibility at all times. A suspension system model suggests that our body coordinates according to our intention. Each coordination is a system-wide response, hence the term *anatomy of wholeness*. (Moir, class lecture, Jan. 09)

This idea that our body is capable of coordinating itself based on our intention is one that continues to transform my teaching, as I search for ways to incorporate this into my private singing instruction, as well as in choir rehearsals. I do this through discussion of the poetry the composer has used because in a well-written vocal composition, the composer has successfully interpreted the poetry through music. I have always found access into the composer's intentions through careful study of the musical structure of the piece in relation to the poetry. When a singer consciously expresses the meaning of the lyrics, and feels the emotions that the words draw out, the body will produce the sound the singer intends. In observing singers—myself and students—I have found that when attention is placed on expressing the emotion of a song, the singer is able to let go of self-conscious worry about making mistakes. Imagination replaces self-doubt, and the body is free to coordinate to the intended wishes of the singer. I guide a singing student to trust his or her vocal technique to body memory, in order to focus on expressing the emotional content of the music. As I experiment with this idea in my teaching, I am amazed at the variety of expression that a singer can produce. It takes much of the responsibility of the sound out of the hands of the teacher, and places it with the student, who is empowered to experiment with the

sound. In this way, the performance becomes the singer's unique expression of the composer's intention. Of course, for this to work properly, a singer must understand all of the functions of traditional vocal pedagogy; relaxation and posture, breath control, resonance, and diction. To me, the difference is in the *use* of these functions. Once a singer understands how to produce beautiful tone, one can set one's intention on the production of the song, and the technical expertise will coordinate according to her intention. This requires trusting yourself as an expressive artist, and trusting your body to support you in your intent as you interpret the music. Interpretation becomes a function of integrity, as the body coordinates to respond to the personal truth that the singer is expressing.

The study at Princeton with James Jordan helped me to link my musical work with my spiritual life. This in turn led me to commission choral music that reflected these two influences in my life. Through La Jeunesse, the youth choral program I had founded and directed, I began to commission choral work that reflected my personal experience in relation to other's lived experience. An example of this is a mass that I commissioned when my mother was ill.

Story: Mass For A Young Girl

It was June 2000, and I was sitting on my back deck, enjoying the flowers in my garden, and reading *Mystical rose*, a novel by Canadian author Richard Scrimger. The story is set at the deathbed of Rose Rolyoke, who is dying. She is 90 years old and has had a small life filled with family happiness, grief and faith. My own mother's health was failing. Two dear friends were facing the end of their mother's lives as well. I was drawn into the story as it is set in the Catholic paradox of debilitating guilt, and the incredibly seductive, poetic imagery of the Catholic faith. I am nearing the end of the book. As the reader, I have experienced Rose's life, from a young child to a woman dying. Her failing memory, her personal losses, the prayers—something about the whole book has managed to echo what I know of my mother's life. Before she dies, Rose says the following prayer to God:

“It’s a matter of faith isn’t it? All right, here is my prayer right now. I’m still lying down, staring at blackness. And I’m praying. I, Rose, ninety years in the dying, ask You to look after me—not in the future, because it’s slipping away faster than a drunk’s inheritance. Look after me in the past.

That’s right. If your grace is truly infinite, it knows not space, nor can it be confined in time. Look after my youth, will You? Look after me in the cradle. Let Your grace wash my childhood clean. Be most careful of my growth, my young womanhood, my own experience of love and trust. Let Your face be turned toward me as the years run back. Please. Heal my hurts, infuse me with hope, bring me to faith, to love. Bless the girl I was. Keep her in Your care. Watch over me all of the days of the life I leave now. Amen”. (Scrimger, 2000, p. 231)

Reading this, I thought first about my mother and her sisters—their generation growing up in the depression, their young adulthood formed in World War II. I thought of myself and all of the children born from my mother’s generation. I had children of my own, and I was teaching many children of the subsequent generation. So many young women, so many dreams. I phoned my friend, Canadian composer Mark Sirett. The choir was planning a trip to Greece, and I was looking for a mass that we could sing in the cathedrals while we were there. I asked if he would consider writing an acapella mass for us. He agreed, and we commissioned Richard Scrimger, the author and Mark Sirett the composer, to write “Mass For a Young Girl.” The text, “Bless the girl I was, keep her in Your care. Watch over her, all the days of the life I leave now,” was used for the introit and the benediction. Richard wrote short bits of text that reflected a young woman’s life, and Mark set them to music, placing them as interpolations between the parts of the mass. This work was premiered and recorded in April 2001. It appears on the La Jeunesse CD “Spirit on the wing.” The benediction has been used a number of times in funerals of mothers and grandmothers.

Through La Jeunesse Youth Choirs, I have commissioned over twenty choral works that are sung by choirs everywhere. “Mass For a Young Girl” remains one of my favourite. Somehow, Richard

Scrimger's words reach beyond any single person's life, into the realm of complete faith. Mark Sirett's tender melody and intricate harmony have a lovely fragility mixed with strength. They seem perfectly suited to a girls' choir.

Early experiences in church, my mother's involvement in my early musical education, life experiences of joy and grief, adult education experiences in vocal pedagogy, the determination to use my personal and professional experience for community service: These have all factored into my decision to study self-knowledge and vocal pedagogy. I continue to be enthused about this subject, and will continue my research after my thesis is completed.

Synthesis of Four Perspectives

The discussions with Anne Patteson, Wendy Lewela Perkins, Victoria Moon Joyce, and my own ideas all touched on similar themes. All were aware of the healing power that singing has had in our own lives as well as in the lives of our students. The following are the main themes that I recognized as relevant for use in the ten lessons with Rachael.

Singing Is For Joy

Singing brings joy to people's lives. The interview conversations all spoke powerfully about the emergence of joy while singing. Patteson used the phrase "joyous singing." Expressions of joy were impossible to miss on the faces of singers at Lewela Perkin's sessions of *Soulful Singing*. Joyce's singing workshops surprised the singers into strong emotion that they hadn't experienced in a very long time. After one singing episode, someone asked, "Is this what joy is? I'd never experienced it; the feeling is strange to me" (T J 2). After a lifetime of serious study in vocal pedagogy, I now feel that this may be the most important reason for facilitating singing.

Singing Is For Transformation: Saying Yes To Joy

A transforming experience is available to anyone who is open to the experience, and saying yes to the experience is the key to personal change. All three interviewees facilitate singing experiences

that promote personal change. As Lewela Perkins said, “It’s about, they open up to themselves and places in them and they become more real. Isn’t that what we all want? You know, to be authentic and true to ourselves and to know ourselves a little better and to follow our hearts, our deep longing” (T LP 19).

Lewela Perkins works primarily with people who choose to participate in her singing sessions. Making the choice to participate implies that one has already said yes to the invitation that Lewela Perkins has offered. This is also true of Patteson’s singing practice, where a student contracts with her for the purpose of singing lessons. Joyce offered a different perspective when she described the physical transformation that happened in the course of a singing workshop with women in prison:

I was invited by an Elder to spend a day singing with a group of women who were incarcerated in Fort Smith. I went in and people were very tight. You know, the arms across the chest, and don’t reveal much. And by the end of the day people were lying on the floor, they were draped over the chairs, they had laughed, they had cried, they were *singing*. (T J 11)

When given the opportunity to sing, women whose lives were miserable were able to respond joyfully to each other and to themselves as singers. They were given a break from the dehumanizing experience of prison life; remembering themselves as people who could relax and enjoy life. Describing their state at the end of the singing day, Joyce said, “And connecting with each other and connecting with me, and the Elder, and just feeling like wow, get back into the van to do time, but they had had a break” (T J 12).

My own experience as a teacher and an artist tells me that the teacher’s invitation to transformation needs to be met with a desire for change from the student. Joyce’s experience demonstrated the importance of offering that experience of joy to people who have forgotten what the word joy means. Transformation happens in the remembering.

Hospitality: A Safe Place, A Sacred Space

All four perspectives (those of the three people interviewed and my own) recognized the need to build a safe space for the singing. Ann spoke of the importance of creating a different energy around the lesson time. She uses personal conversation to establish a sense of trust. Wendy sets up her physical space and begins each session in a way that creates a sacred space. Singers know from reliable experience that when they enter a session of *Soulful Singing*, they are free to express themselves without concern that they will be judged. Victoria uses exercises to “disinhibit” singers who may feel self-conscious about singing. She said, “If you present the opportunity [to sing] in a safe context, if it is irresistible, people will engage as they can” (T J 4). I know that trust is given when one’s actions are consistent. When a singing student returns regularly to a lesson space that practices acceptance, understanding, and mutual sharing, trust develops naturally. This is relevant to the student/teacher relationship as in other life situations.

Singing is Holistic

Each of those interviewed spoke about the capacity of singing to reconnect one to one’s emotions as expressed through the body. Ann spoke of singing as a way to “arrive at the place where they feel more integrated.” Joyce discussed the way that life’s tragedies can turn us into “talking heads,” completely disconnected from our bodies, and said that she uses singing to reconnect emotions and physical sensation to the mind. She said that to offer a singing experience is “to have a humanizing experience, to make beauty, to have the experience of creating song, to lift their spirits and feel more whole” (T J 5). Wendy talked about singing as a medicine that can be used consciously to heal life’s wounds. She said, “the song is a symbol of that medicine.” I have watched students drag themselves into a lesson or a rehearsal in a state of exhaustion, depression, or lethargy, to leave at the end with a smile and energy restored. When one’s energy shifts from negative to positive, the effects ripple through one’s life. Relationships and events can be viewed in a new light. New, more positive choices can be seen as possible. Life moves toward wholeness.

Singing Is Empowering

Lewela Perkins' acceptance of everyone's voice empowers her singers to bring their own personal expression to each song. When I sang in her sessions, I felt free from the notion that I might make a mistake. I found it exhilarating to be part of a community of singers united in producing a song; moving in response to rhythms and melodies that are being created as they are sung. I always came away feeling that I had expressed myself creatively. This in itself was empowering. Joyce initially used singing in workshops as one way out of many to empower women. She found that the singing was so empowering that she began to develop workshops that focused primarily on singing as an avenue for change. In my singing studio, I have watched students develop abilities to express emotion creatively. I have observed that self-expression through song is a powerful way to personally address the world. Singing with other people empowers the whole group as everyone's energy is focused into one unified expression.

Singing Is Fun

I have always loved singing—in groups, on my own, as a teacher or performer—it has always been a primary source of enjoyment in my life. Even so, I was surprised to hear how Patteson, Lewela Perkins and Joyce all spoke of the importance they placed on the capacity to have fun in their sessions. Patteson said it is important to laugh a lot. The creative fun in Lewela Perkin's sessions is built into her choice of repertoire, use of instruments, and the wide range of vocal sound that people are able to invent when no restrictions are in place. Joyce spoke at length of the games she uses to “disinhibit” people. Her workshops are intended “to make some play and be together, to play joyfully and have fun” (T J 1).

Singing Is For Everyone

As a professional musician I found it interesting that all of the interviewees spoke strongly about the idea that singing is for everyone. Ann came through a similar training as my own, in which she was identified early as talented. She received formal musical training early in life, and

participated in musical training at university. Immersed in this world, she came to a conclusion similar to my own, that singing appeared to be relevant to only a very few people with beautiful tone and artistic sensibilities. A lifetime of experience teaching and performing has changed this idea for both of us. “You call it art, I call it life” is the way Ann described her perception of singing now. Singing is available to everyone, as a means of personal expression, in community or alone, to celebrate, mourn, reflect, and reconnect to all of life’s experiences.

I have experienced the diversity of singing abilities in Wendy’s *Soulful Singing* group—from professional singers to those who can barely keep a tune; there is a leveling of ability that happens automatically as you enter the space. When acceptance is the dominant feature in the room, judgment has no place. Consequently, everyone participates as they can, and every contribution enhances the whole. Because of the nature of Joyce’s workshops, in which she uses singing for empowerment, non-singers are a large part of her clientele. She has developed a number of techniques to connect singers to their personal self-expression.

Joyce’s use of singing workshops to reconnect people with their “joyful presence” is another example of singing as a universal tool.

Lessons For The Lessons

The interviews underlined the importance of joy, transformation, hospitality, holism, universality, empowerment, and fun as the keys that could provide access to self-knowledge in a singing lesson. This provided a clear shift in perspective for me from the focus of a traditional singing lesson where development of beautiful tone was the goal. Joy, transformation, empowerment, universality, and fun are all states of being that can arise when conditions are created to draw them out. Using holism and creating hospitality are ways to bring these states (joy, transformation, empowerment, universality and fun) into a person’s conscious state of being. The interviews with Patteson, Lewela Perkins, and Joyce validated my idea that spiritual practices could be used effectively in a singing lesson. When hospitality is treated as a spiritual practice it

creates an atmosphere of honouring. Patteson, Lewela Perkins and Joyce all emphasized the importance of taking the time to connect personally with their students at the beginning of every session. The interviewees underlined the idea that conversation intended to cultivate relationship was an effective way to foster trust. In turn, that relationship of trust in the teacher encouraged a singer to take risks in a lesson. A lesson that encouraged risk could create empowerment and fun. In turn, transformation and joy might show up. Space could be created for new ways of doing things thus revealing hidden aspects of the personality. This is a process that could be made available to anyone no matter the level of intelligence, ability, or talent.

Patteson has pursued singing from a position of an affirming pedagogy. Wendy Lewela-Perkin's work has a strong spiritual quality. Victoria Moon Joyce uses singing to empower women. All three women use holism as part of their vocal pedagogy and as a result are able to create transformative experiences. That is the aspect that I found most intriguing, as my life experiences with singing and holism are what led me to this study on singing and self-knowledge.

In many ways, I feel that I have somehow stumbled into this research, and it has refreshed my work, after years of traditional vocal practice. It has captured my imagination as an artist and a teacher; as if I have been given a new box of crayons whose colours include joy, transformation, hospitality, empowerment, holism, universality, and fun.

I have grown as a teacher from my conversations with these three remarkable instructors. In the next chapter, I discuss the second phase of my research design—the ten lessons with Rachael. The themes that emerged from the interviews with Patteson, Lewela Perkins, and Joyce factored into the way I presented the lessons.

CHAPTER FOUR: RACHAEL SINGS

Inside you there's an artist you don't know about... .

*Say yes quickly, if you know, if you've known it
from before the beginning of the universe. (Rumi)*

The Ten Lessons

In this chapter, I describe the ten lessons with Rachael, giving details about my lesson preparation; what worked, what did not work, and how I refined my plan as the lessons progressed. I show how Rachael's reaction to each lesson influenced the design of the next lesson. I name and explain the elements that emerged as Rachael and I became acquainted with each other's strengths and challenges. Finally, I describe our conversation in the last session, when we discussed our perceptions of the process, from first meeting to the final lesson. Quotes from the lessons transcripts and field notes will be as follows: T for transcription, L for lesson, and 1 for the lesson week that the quote occurred. For example, Transcription, the lessons, week one would look like this (T L 1).

We begin

In lesson one, I gave Rachael a binder. The first thing I put in the binder was the following letter I had written explaining the basic outline of the lesson, asking if the format was acceptable to her.

Dear Rachael,

Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this research with me. Each of our lessons will last approximately 45 minutes. In that time, we will probably always do some vocal warm-ups and song repertoire. Can we also consider together the following ideas?

I wonder how you would feel about beginning with some vocal warm-ups, followed by five minutes of journal writing. The writing would be free-form—anything that comes into your head. It doesn't matter if it relates to music or to anything else. This writing wouldn't be seen by me or anyone else. It would act

as a starter to engage your thoughts and emotions. You would keep this material for yourself or throw it out. Do you have any thoughts about this?

Are you comfortable keeping a journal or a commonplace book like the one I have showed you?

Are there any boundaries that you would like to have in place before we begin?

Are there any vocal activities that may make you uncomfortable?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

What is your best singing memory?

What is your worst musical memory? (T L 1)

Once Rachael had read this letter, we discussed the format; Rachael agreed to all of my suggestions, and so we proceeded. Every week, before Rachael came into the lesson, I had prepared the dining room table, with a candle lit, tea prepared, and sometimes some finger food if the lesson was near lunchtime.

Lesson Plans

Every week, I had lesson sheets prepared for Rachael, which I gave her to place into her binder. They were created weekly in response to the material we covered in the previous lesson. I used the same format for nine lessons; a quote or comment at the beginning, a brief outline of the lesson plan, and some questions for reflection as the lesson progressed. I have included these sheets as Appendix B.

The final session was an interview at my dining room table, where Rachael and I discussed the lessons, from each of our perspectives, as student and teacher. The transcript of this discussion became useful when I sat down to analyze our work together.

Lesson Format

We always began at my dining room table, with a few minutes of personal conversation. Then, while still at the table we would begin the lesson. For about ten minutes we sang vowels,

hummed with the crystal singing bowl, listened to a recording, or improvised a sound poem. These exercises were intended to bring Rachael from her work life to a different space, open the mind and imagination, and get the voice working. From there we went over to the piano and worked on more vigorous vocal exercises, using vowels, physical movement and imagery. After that, we moved into singing songs.

The First Five Lessons: What Emerged

Resistance: I'm doing it wrong

One of the things that impressed me from our first meeting was Rachael's commitment to personal growth. Her desire to "find her voice"—her personal expression—was so in accordance with my own research goals that it seemed that I had found a student who was perfectly matched for the research questions that I wished to explore. This harmony of purpose did not necessarily make the process easy. Rachael had an unswerving determination to gain a freer access to self-expression and so I was quite surprised at the level of resistance that she applied to every aspect of the lesson. Exercises to promote posture awareness, breathing exercises, any singing on vowels; were all met with skepticism. The songs that she chose needed to be adjusted through several transpositions before we finally settled on a key that worked for Rachael. Part of this was a physical discomfort with notes higher than she was accustomed to singing. Another part of resistance always occurred when I suggested trying out new ways of experiencing her voice. Rachael was uncomfortable with new ways of producing sounds, exercises that connected the voice to the body. Many of the exercises challenged her sense of dignity. Using the arms or legs to generate energy, sliding through notes on vowels, exercises designed to open space in the sound; all these ideas caused anxiety for Rachael. Although Rachael really did want a greater freedom in her expression, it appeared that she was bound to the idea of the sound of her voice as it had always been, and resisted changing any part of the production of the tone. Her tone in speech is very dark and rich. When she spoke about her singing, her tone was always tinged with

cynicism, and it took several lessons for her to acknowledge that she enjoyed the sound of her singing. She told me that she had received compliments all of her life about her beautiful speaking voice. She really appeared to love her voice, while hating the way she used it.

When I asked Rachael about her goals in the singing lessons, she said that she wished to be able to express herself comfortably in a group setting (T L 1). From the first lesson onward, Rachael evaluated every sound that she made, and her judgments were always highly critical. In the first lesson, we sang through James Taylor's song "Fire and Rain." When she finished singing, we had the following conversation:

R: *It's too high.*

M: *Oh my God, it's beautiful. Can we try it here (referring to a lower key)? (Rachael sings in this key, but with obvious discomfort. The tone is actually very lovely.)*

M: *What do you think of that sound? Now look at the look on your face (laughter)!*

R: *I sound squeaky to me. (T L 1)*

Self-consciousness

Weeks one to four progressed very slowly as I searched for ways to engage Rachael physically and emotionally with her singing. She was very self-conscious about using any physical movement to connect her sound with her body. This made it difficult to encourage good breath support and improve tone quality. Clark (2001) discussed the fact that when a group of art students drew their self-portrait, everyone except one person drew only their head. One person drew the whole body. In reference to the bodiless portraits, Clark said:

This isn't surprising because we're situated within a culture that has a complex and largely troubled relationship with the body. The Western cultural discourse on the body is couched most often in terms of gaining control over it, most prominently by physical exercise or by dieting so that we can meet social norms

of healthiness or body size. But short of the assaults of illness and aging, our experience of the body is usually unconscious and largely unspoken. We live much more comfortably in our heads than in our bodies. (p. 84)

This was true for Rachael as she argued strongly about every physical action I suggested. This appeared to be a matter of self-consciousness. An example of this is recorded in my journal field notes following the week two lesson:

Vocalization on a sliding “ah” and “oo” were quite weak at first. When we went to the piano, the voice gained strength as I asked her to send the sound about 10 feet away from her. I showed her a movement to do with her hands but she wasn’t comfortable doing that. (T L 2)

The pattern of resistance/desire to change was already in place. My final comment in my journal for the lesson week two was this: “Although Rachael was very resistant, she is here, and she is doing as much as she can. She is very courageous” (T L 2).

Repertoire

In session one, I had asked Rachael to think of songs that she enjoyed and might like to sing. She chose one song that she had enjoyed as a child called “The Rainbow Connection” (Williams & Ascher, 1979). The other three songs that she thought she would like to sing were as follows: (a) “I Can’t Make You Love Me,” (Reid & Shamblin, 1991), (b) “Ten Thousand Miles” (Chapin Carpenter, 1999), and (c) “Fire and Rain” (Taylor, 1978). I obtained the written manuscript for two of these songs, but was unable to get a written version of the Chapin Carpenter song, “Ten Thousand Miles.” I was familiar with the James Taylor song “Fire and Rain,” but I did not know the other two songs. When I listened to them, I realized that each song had a sense of resigned sadness. Phrases like “And I will give up this fight, ‘cos I can’t make you love me” (Reid and Shamblin, 1991), “She’s weeping for her own true love, and I shall weep for mine” (Chapin Carpenter, 1999), and “I’ve seen lonely times when I could not find a friend, but I always thought that I’d see you again” (Taylor, 1978). The melodies in each song are intensely beautiful and

evoke a sense of resignation. In reflecting on the lessons in week one and two, I felt that the sad nature of the repertoire was contributing to the low energy level and sense of melancholy in Rachael's singing. Rachael wanted to sing music that she already knew, as she felt that new vocal concepts were difficult enough without having to learn notes and words as well.

I wanted to honour Rachael's choice of songs, and yet somehow lift her energy level to a place where breath support and tone could be sustained with more dependability. Fortunately, we were able to begin singing Christmas carols in week six. Rachael knew a number of carols very well, and was pleased to sing songs that were familiar to her. From week six on, we sang through many carols, and recorded "Silent Night" as a Christmas gift for her mother.

Vowels

Since the choice of song was somewhat limiting, I supplemented the repertoire with a number of different vowel exercises designed to encourage breath control, consistent and beautiful tone, and range extension. This is very much in accordance with a traditional singing lesson. In addition to this technical use of vowels, vowels formed the basis of a variety of exercises that were intended to open new avenues of imagination and creativity; exercises that could be easily sung, and required a bit of playfulness and engagement of body and spirit. In week one, we played a name game with the vowels in Rachael's name. Beginning with a simple repetition of the pitches "so-mi," I invited Rachael to sing the vowels in her name. I sang them, and asked her to sing them back to me, changing the colour and tone as we exchanged back and forth: this lasted for a few minutes. At the end of this exercise, Rachael sang "Who knew that my name could have such character"? (T L 1).

We continued in week three and four to work on vowels. Rachael was not comfortable sliding up and down in five-note patterns, but she did it anyway. She was not receptive to singing in a higher register, and exercises that were designed to get her to sing in her head tone (her upper register) made her feel silly. I continued to search for ways to engage Rachael's imagination and stimulate

new ways to produce open, invigorating tone. The vowel exercises were much more successful after week five, to the point where we were improvising short musical pieces. In week eight, I asked that we sit in silence for a minute, and that Rachael use that time to breathe deeply, and center herself. I then asked her to begin to sing an improvised melody on any vowel that she chooses. I said, “Start from where you are right now, on whatever level you feel that you can, and then go as deeply as you can” (T L 8). This was intentionally vague, as I wanted Rachael to decide for herself how she would respond to my request. After a long silence, (almost two minutes) she began to sing very low in her range, moving upward in a gentle, lilting melody that lasted about a minute. I joined her and we moved into a call and response singing conversation. Rachael’s voice gained strength as she continued to sing. She began a new melody and I repeated it, added to it. Rachael improvised willingly, and we both enjoyed the exchange.

Hmmmmmmmm: Making progress

In week four, I invited Rachael to vocalize accompanied by a crystal singing bowl. I purchased my crystal singing bowl about five years ago, and have used it successfully in rehearsals, singing lessons, and choir concerts. I wanted to introduce the singing bowl into the lessons with Rachael because the crystal singing bowl is often used as a healing tool (Brodie, 1996). Boyce-Tillman (2007) referred to the singing bowl as an instrument that “with limited technique can produce in both player and listener a sense of calm and peace often described as spiritual” (p. 1408). We used a large bowl, tuned to a B flat below middle C. Rachael sat at the end of a table, and I rang the bowl using a leather mallet. The tone was deep, resonant, comforting and penetrating at the same time. As the bowl resonated, Rachael hummed the same pitch as the bowl, breathing as she needed to, and then resuming the hum. A crystal singing bowl will continue to ring for some time after you activate its vibration. When the tone had rung itself into silent air, Rachael continued to hum with her eyes closed. She appeared to be enjoying the hum so much that when we moved over to the piano to sing “Fire and Rain,” I asked her to sing it through to a hum. We sang it in

the key of B flat—the same key as the bowl— and she enjoyed that very much. Her tone and facial expression showed that the low tone of the bowl was very pleasing to her. I asked Rachael to go home and hum a B flat every morning when she woke up. Throughout the week, I sent Rachael emails reminding her to hum in the morning. At the following lesson, she told me that when she received the emails, she would go over to the piano and hum that note. I asked her to do this to extend the pleasure of the hum that she experienced in the lesson.

In week seven (after our breakthrough in week five. I will describe this in detail on page 91) I gave Rachael another small homework request. In the spirit of play, I placed a large full-coloured picture of Kermit the Frog on an 8x11 sheet of paper. Under the image, I suggested to Rachael the following exercise:

Rachael, try this: For five minutes each day, hum or sing “The Rainbow Connection.” Listen to your beautiful, dark brown velvet voice as you sing. If you feel up to it, play a bit with the dynamics, the tempo, and the way you and Kermit interpret the song. Recognize that these affirming feelings that you call up are a valid, authentic part of yourself that can be stronger than the self-doubting and self-judging part. (T L 7)

The following week I asked Rachael if she had done the exercise. She said she had. When I asked her if it had had any effect, she said: “It always does. Listening to “The Rainbow Connection” always makes me feel lighter” (T L 8).

Although the first few lessons were difficult, we moved along in an uncertain path. My impression was that Rachael would have been happy to simply sing songs that she enjoyed. As that had not been our original agreement, I pressed on with technical exercises, tea, conversation, journaling and goodwill.

Student/Teacher Relationship: How to proceed?

From week one to week four, much of my work between lessons involved looking for ways to engage Rachael’s spirit in a manner that she could accept intellectually, and manage physically.

For progress to be made, I needed to offer ways for Rachael to acquire a higher level of energy: a level sufficient to accept an ample supply of breath into the body, which could then be used easily and freely to support her tone. I searched for acceptable ways for her to open her throat so that air could pass easily into her lungs, transpiring as beautiful tone. We continued the vowel work: Singing happens on the vowels, and so I persisted with the vowel work even when Rachael resisted. I looked for ways to engage her imagination, so that she could envision a new sound and sense of freedom for herself. Most of all, my hope was that Rachael would begin to experience the joy that singing can bring into a life.

I was constantly aware that Rachael was self-conscious about her presence and uncomfortable with physical movement and unusual sounds. Even so, I felt that part of my job was to challenge her to find new ways to experience her voice. Albert Einstein said, “If you do the same thing over and over again, you cannot ever expect a different outcome” (quoted in Slabbinck & Shaw-Slabbinck, 2005, p. 21). I often felt as if I was balancing on a tightrope made of respect and daring—hoping that I did not press too far, always nudging her to go one step further, one step further, until we arrived at a new, freer level of self-expression.

Throughout the first four sessions, Rachael and I maneuvered back and forth, she making disparaging comments about the sound of her voice, while I searched for ways to raise her energy levels and open avenues for new sounds and new ideas. Week two was particularly difficult. However, I came to understand that Rachael would make an effort to do everything I suggested. This push-pull approach carried on for four lessons, each of us working very hard. All of this struggle came to a head in week five. Before I explain that transformation, I will provide some explanation of how this change was able to occur.

The Catalyst for Transformation: The Spirit of Kermit Appears

Why are there so many songs about rainbows

And what's on the other side?

Rainbows are visions, but only illusions
And rainbows have nothing to hide (Williams, 1979)

Kermit the Frog was the MC of a wonderful television series called The Muppets that played weekly from 1976 to 1981. Brought to life through the imagination of Jim Henson, Kermit charmed his viewers with his relaxed sense of hospitality and fun. Kermit became a symbol of many things throughout the ten singing lessons. In week one, we discussed repertoire, and Rachael commented that “The Rainbow Connection,” (1979) Kermit’s signature song, had been one of her favourite songs since early childhood. I had a copy of the song, so we sang through it. I think that both Rachael and I felt the power of the song as Rachael sang. When we discussed her singing, Rachael commented on the simple wisdom of the words (T L 2). In session two, I played a recording from Youtube of Kermit the Frog singing “The Rainbow Connection.” I asked Rachael to listen to the song and write any words or phrases that popped out to her as she listened. After we listened to the song, she said, *I’ll never get past the ‘plinka plinka’* [of the banjo] (T L 2). I then asked her, *Where does this song take you?* She replied, *To my childhood, to love of the Muppets, to the Kermit of my childhood* (T L 2). When I encouraged Rachael to expand on her connection to “The Rainbow Connection,” she said:

I think the Muppets are one of my very few genuinely happy memories associated from my childhood. Part of me doesn’t want to look at the deeper meanings. I am happier just conjuring up the image of Kermit on the log with his banjo. There’s just a simplicity to it; no complicated human drama, just a frog and his banjo. Yes there is an absurdity to it, but Jim Henson and the Muppets somehow made me believe that anything could happen in this world, including a frog sitting on a log, playing his banjo and singing. (T L 2)

This sense of hope and trust surfaced repeatedly throughout the ten lessons. With her request to find her voice, and her commitment to the process of personal growth, Rachael was always able to find her “inner Kermit.” By this I mean that the symbol of Kermit finding pleasure in simply

playing his banjo and singing, became a personal symbol of Rachael's own singing. From my perspective, I adopted Kermit as representing acceptance and hospitality throughout Rachael's lessons. In an episode of "The Muppets," no matter what guest appeared on the program and no matter how crazy a situation became, Kermit was always even-tempered, resourceful, and welcoming. When we experienced a transformation in week five, it happened through surprise and play, a method very familiar to Kermit and the Muppets.

In lesson two, as Rachael spoke about her connection to the song, "The Rainbow Connection, she was overcome with emotion. Tears welled up in her eyes and we paused for a short time. When she said that she wished to leave the happy memory of the song intact, we moved on to breathing exercises sung on the vowels. This was a time, in the lessons, when I understood that Rachael needed space around her feelings; that her childhood memory of Kermit singing was a sensation of beauty and love. And that experience was still vivid enough to bring her to tears.

Transformation: Week Five

As we proceeded through the lessons, Kermit continued to appear, always in the context of fun mixed with vocal progress. In week five, an experience of play became a pivotal moment of progress that allowed Rachael's voice to open up; her range increased immediately by about six notes in her upper register, and the tone acquired a brightness and expressive quality that had not been present before. A number of factors synchronized to allow this breakthrough to occur. I had to move this lesson from my home to a different setting because of carpentry work going on in my home. The new place was much larger, and so allowed a larger range of movement. The timing of this lesson became important as week five was half-way through the lessons and also a few days before Rachael was to have eye surgery. I had prepared a sheet asking Rachael to reflect on the lessons we had completed so far. The thought of surgery was weighing heavily on Rachael's mind. When she saw the sheet, she burst into tears, and said she couldn't possibly do

any writing at this time. I then decided that instead of our usual conversation at the beginning of the lesson, we would begin to sing immediately, and so invited Rachael over to the piano.

Our usual warm-up vocalization was not going well. The tone was lacking energy and Rachael sounded sad and disengaged. I kept going with vowels and scales and Rachael soon became frustrated and argumentative. I instructed her to breath deeply and then sing open vowels sounds on five-note scale patterns. I was singing with Rachael as she vocalized to encourage more tone from her. This was distressing for her and she told me that when I sang with her, she lost *her* voice. This was most disconcerting, because in all of my effort to encourage more tone, more energy, I seemed to be reducing her sense of herself. This was exactly the opposite effect to what I was hoping for! We then had the following conversation:

Marie: OK, so let's do it again. I'll sing, then you sing. We'll do it together once, and then you do it and let's see if you can find those upper overtones.

Rachael: You know what? Every time you say "upper overtones," I have no idea what you're talking about.

Marie: So just try it and let's see what happens.

Rachael: (frustrated) But I'm so busy matching you that I have no idea what I am doing. (T L 5)

We carried on and Rachael became more frustrated with the whole process. After another unsuccessful exercise, the conversation went like this:

Rachael: OK. Wait. Stop. After you play a chord like that, I have trouble knowing which note I am supposed to be doing.

I explained to Rachael how she could use her ear to find the note. The conversation continued:

Marie: You're just relearning the pitching sensation. You haven't done it for awhile ...

Rachael: No.

Marie: *So be patient with the process and trust that ...*

Rachael: *And one of my big things is ... doing it wrong.*

Marie: *Well there's no right or wrong here.*

Rachael: *But that's one of my issues—that I'm doing it wrong—is that need to control—that, what exactly are you doing, because I need to control it. (T L 5)*

We continued on a bit more, but Rachael's tone was very despondent and she was clearly not enjoying any part of the process. I was running out of ideas. I then asked her to raise her arms straight out from her sides as she inhaled, vocalizing on a sustained “ah” vowel as she exhaled. The conversation continued:

Rachael: (unhappily) *With the arms?*

Marie: *My arms are part of my voice, so you do it how you want.*

Rachael: *When we get to this point, my brain goes nope ... and freezes. (T L 5)*

As she said this, I spotted a small stuffed animal, a teddy bear, on the piano. I picked it up and moved across the room. Then I threw it to Rachael, vocalizing a prolonged “whee” as I did so. I asked her to throw it back to me and to vocalize the entire time that the stuffed animal was in the air. She did this easily. We repeated this exercise several times, and her tone had energy, and was produced in her head voice (her upper register) with every “teddy toss.” This was a new development. Rachael matched easily every phrase that I sang to her. She began to laugh, and forgot to listen to herself and make comments about how she sounded. She sang about six notes higher than she was capable of doing only minutes before. The tone was vibrant, full of life and joy. I could hardly believe the change! We then went back to the piano. The following is a portion of the conversation that followed:

Marie: *Would you rather sing “Rainbow” [Connection] or “Fire and Rain”?* Rachael: *“Rainbow” please. I think it's a rainbow*

kind of day. We just chucked a teddy bear around for five minutes (laughter). (T L 5)

We sang it in the lower key that Rachael was used to. She stopped and commented that it was too low. I transposed the key four tones higher, and she sang beautifully all the way through the song. We were both amazed at the difference. We sang for a few more minutes, and then I asked Rachael to comment on her singing that day. She said, *All the restriction[s] in my voice wasn't my voice—it was just me damping it down. The resistance was me, it wasn't about anything else. So it's all about being heard, and speaking loudly (T L 5).* I then played her a recorded portion of the song she had sung, and asked her to comment on her sound. She said, *I can definitely hear the difference when I suddenly stop keeping it all in. Because from one bar to the next, it's like, hello, that's another person singing (T L 5).* I agreed with her; the tone of the singer that she was hearing on the recording had a lighter quality, filled with fun and confidence. I felt that Rachael's innate sense of fun and optimism had emerged with the playful tossing of stuffed animals and vowel-singing. When she went back to singing songs, she *chose* a song that represented happiness. The carefree, joyful essence of Kermit that Rachael loved so much and that we had nurtured from lesson one, had finally made a tangible appearance in a lesson. The use of play and imagination transformed Rachael's singing and her perception of her singing.

I continued to use Kermit and “The Rainbow Connection” throughout the remaining lessons. In lesson seven, I gave Rachael a homework sheet. It had a large full-colour image of Kermit the Frog. The text was as follows:

Rachael, try this: for five minutes each day, hum or sing “The Rainbow Connection.” Listen to your beautiful dark brown velvet voice as you sing. If you feel up to it, play a bit with the dynamics, tempo, and the way you and Kermit interpret the song. Recognize that the affirming feelings that you call up are a valid, authentic part of yourself, that can be stronger than the self-doubting, self-judging part of yourself. (T L 7)

In the following lesson, week eight, I asked Rachael if she had listened to the “The Rainbow Connection,” as I had requested, and if it had changed her mood in any way. She responded, *Oh yes, it always does, I know as a kid, he was real. There’s something about the realms of possibility—there’s a lightness that I don’t get from anything else* (T L 8). “The Rainbow Connection” whether sung by Kermit or Rachael, always engaged Rachael’s ability to call forth optimism and hope. It gave her the opportunity to feel a larger range of emotions, and express them in song. From this pivotal experience with play and Kermit the Frog, Rachael was able to transfer her progress in range extension and beauty of tone to familiar Christmas carols.

The Final Lessons

From week six on, Rachael’s lessons became progressively easier. In week six we discussed the impact of the session with “Teddy.” Rachael listened to herself, and was surprised and pleased by the sound of her voice. She was able to pick out spots where she heard lovely nuances in her words and phrasing. After listening to herself in week six, she said, *I can definitely hear the difference when I suddenly stop (pause) holding it all in* (T L 6). Because we were fast approaching the Christmas season, Rachael chose to sing some Christmas carols. She was so comfortable with these old familiar melodies that we were able to sing through a number of carols, and so we fell into a pattern of easy singing. After singing “Once In Royal David’s City,” she remarked, *It is not too high. It is my feeling of not being able to control it* (T L 6). Every aspect of the lesson changed for the better as Rachael became enthused by the power and beauty in her voice, and the way she could use it. By the end of the lesson six, I remarked to Rachael:

M: *It’s just so beautiful, Rachael, your voice is so beautiful. And whether you realize it or not, the inflections in your words are so, so beautiful. So I want you to hear what you just sang.* (T L 7)

I played her recorded singing back to her and she was very pleased. At this point, it appeared that Rachael’s singing had become a source of pleasure for her. Because of this, and because

Christmas was only a few days away, I suggested that she make a tape of her singing that she could give as a gift or just keep for herself. She thought that she could record “The Rainbow Connection” and “Silent Night,” and that it could be a gift for her mother. We set a time to do this and the songs were recorded before Christmas. During the actual recording, we sang through the song twice. The second time through, she played with the colour of tone and the pitch, adding a stylish third as the final note of the piece—Kermit would have been proud! The sound was strong and confident from the beginning to the end. This was a point in the research when I could only be grateful to Teddy, Kermit, and the persistence of the human spirit towards growth and beauty. Lessons seven, eight, and nine showed steady progress. Rachael’s voice became stronger, more confident. Her range had extended six full notes more than in the first four sessions. She willingly sang many Christmas carols and lots of exercises. Before singing “The Huron Carol,” Rachael expressed concern about being able to sing the high notes in the song. Our conversation went as follows:

Rachael: *I guess my concern is that my voice will go back to what it was like before.*

Marie: *We’ll go a little higher, and if you don’t like the tone, keep going! Who cares? (T L 8)*

I sang the high part for her, so she would hear how it sounded before she tried to sing it. Then I said, *Let’s just assume that this is going to sound horrible. Squawk your way through it and let’s see what happens (T L 6)*. I hoped that my painting a “worse case scenario,” if the sound wasn’t good, would free her from worrying about the sound. She sang the song in F minor, which meant that the highest note she sang was a C above middle C, on the phrase “In excelsis gloria.” Rachael’s voice broke slightly as I watched her back away physically and emotionally from the highest note in the phrase. I urged her to sing it again and this time, to throw a javelin as she sang the top note. I did this knowing that the physical gesture would generate the energy that she needed to sing her high note. She then sang the phrase three times in a row with well-supported,

full tone. In week nine, we went back to the two pieces I had suggested to Rachael in the preliminary lesson. They were “Song For a winter’s Night” by Gordon Lightfoot, and “Angel” by Sarah MacLachlan. She sang through both of them with no hesitation, and beautiful, expressive tone. After the lesson, I recorded the following journal field notes entry:

Rachael had a great lesson today. There was no hesitancy to do any of the activities I asked from her. The exercises were much easier for her and there was no hesitancy in her sound. After the warm-up, I suggested that we sing through Gordon Lightfoot’s “Song For A Winter’s Night.” She sang it through and worked on opening the register for her high notes. The voice rang clear and strong. What I heard today that is different from before is an unmistakable sense of pleasure in singing this repertoire. With the pleasure came a naturally expressive musicality. This is new and a breakthrough. I’m so impressed with the change in energy, tone, mood. She was able to sing through long phrases easily.
(T L 8)

Even though the progress was steady in the last five sessions, Rachael continued to evaluate the sound of her voice in a negative way. This happened consistently from week one to week nine. The difference in the final sessions was that she began to take note of her negative reactions and their effect on her singing. In week eight, we did an improvisational sound conversation, making spontaneous melody on vowels sounds. This would not have been possible in the early lessons, as self-consciousness would have inhibited her from working in such a free form. When we were finished, Rachael talked about her improvisation. She said, *What I think is interesting about what I just did is that I just allowed music, (pause) to form* (T L 8). I agreed, and we continued to talk about self-expression. The following conversation took place:

Rachael: *The music has a voice of its own.*

Marie: *And that voice is part of you.*

Rachael: *It’s just—getting out of the way.*

Marie: *Yeah.*

Rachael: *That is what I got about Saturday morning [the last lesson]. I resist everything. My entire life is just pushing against everything. So this was just another example.*

Marie: *But you're not pushing now. There's such willingness. It comes back to me as beauty—of the soul.*

Rachael: *Mhmm. Yes, because it's the allowing. Sunday morning, I thought, "OK, I'm going to surrender, and then tomorrow I'll decide whether I'm going to surrender or not. So it's kind of a day-by-day thing. When you're thinking, 'Oh God, how is this going to make me look'? I still carry it, but it's not as debilitating as before. (T L 6)*

From this conversation, we went to the piano and worked on breathing exercises. Rachael managed them easily. However, in week nine, although the progress vocally was considerable, she was still critical of her sound. After a breath exercise on the sound “zhhhhhh,” she commented, *it doesn't sound like zhing. I'm doing it wrong (T L 9).*

Accepting that her sound is a beautiful self-expression will be an ongoing project for Rachael. When Rachael let go of listening to her voice, her natural musicality came through. In the course of the lessons, as the sound became freer, I was able to hear Rachael's unique sound. She has a dark, warm tonal quality. Her interpretation of the poetry she sang was always tinged with melancholy, and her phrasing was gentle and flowing. I wrote about her sound in my personal journal:

Rachael is opening up and singing her peace. Her sound sings in a beautiful expression of sadness mixed with loneliness and hope. My image of this woman is someone with a lid on her pot. She lifts the lid every once in awhile and then shuts it back down. Rachael is very bright with lots of potential: it's up to her to use it. (personal journal entry, Dec. 10, 2008)

When I pressed her to breathe deeper and to use more of the body, she produced a determined quality adding strength to her sound. This is consistent with Rachael's personality, as she revealed herself in the lessons.

Rachael and I used the final lesson to discuss the progress, the stumbling blocks, what worked and what could have been improved in the sessions. Rachael was able to articulate how uncomfortable she was with many of the vowel exercises, combined with the body movement. She spoke of how difficult it was for her to do these exercises. Much of the difficulty centered on the fact that she couldn't control her sound while I was asking her to do two or more things at once. For example, we discussed a breathing exercise where I asked her to use her arms to initiate a breath seated low in the body. The conversation went as follows:

*Marie: It was interesting, often the banter back and forth was,
"No, I'm not doing this," I'm not comfortable ...*

Rachael: And then off we go! (laughter).

*Marie: And then you did it. And each time you did it, it was
pretty dramatic what happened there.*

Rachael: Yeah.

*Marie: Did you feel that you were forced to do things that you
didn't want to do?*

*Rachael: Well you see, no, because I knew that if there was
something that I didn't want to do, that you would say OK and
find a different way. So that was a very comforting thing. (T L
10)*

Even though I came to understand that Rachael would constantly evaluate all of her singing, I also understood that there was strong chance that she would try whatever I suggested. In this way, we made steady, begrudging progress. After week five, the progress was faster and more pronounced.

For a study that involved examining singing lessons that centred on gaining self-knowledge, ten lessons was enough time to determine whether a methodology was working, and how it might be improved in the future. It was also enough time to begin to offer new ways for a student to look at old habits and ideas, and try on new ideas to see how they feel. Rachael did this throughout the lessons. In the ten lessons, I had acquired plenty of material to address my three research questions, and that is what I will discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: IT TAKES A WHOLE PERSON TO SING AND REJOICE

Body, mind, spirit, voice,

It takes a whole person to sing and rejoice. (Helen Kemp)

Back to the Questions

The themes and patterns that emerged from the data in the three interviews from Ann Patteson, Wendy Lewela Perkins, and Victoria Moon Joyce, and the ten lessons with Rachael provided some answers for each of my research questions. Although this study involved only one student, I believe that the findings will have a substantial effect on my own practice and may offer ideas to other practitioners interested in using singing as a path to self-knowledge. There was also only one teacher in this study and another teacher would most certainly have different insights and strategies. Other limitations are that the singing student was a female adult and the lesson series was limited to ten lessons.

Question One: Self-knowledge

Question one was, *What approaches to singing are beneficial to facilitating self- knowledge and what approaches are detrimental?*

To answer this question, I returned to the findings from the three interviews and the covenant I had created before the lessons began. There were seven main themes from the three interviewees. The themes that most influenced the ten singing lessons were: a singing lesson can be hospitable, holistic, fun, empowering, joyful and transforming. From the learning covenant, the points that I found most useful in the lessons involved the use of hospitality, trust, respect, commitment to the student and to the process, and “teaching as occasioning” (Davis, 2004). Those elements that proved to be difficult were mostly to do with approaches designed to teach traditional vocal pedagogy. I worked on vowels, scales, breath control, and range extension using exercises that encouraged Rachael to slide up and down scale patterns on vowels. I used imagery to explain

many vocal concepts to Rachael. I encouraged Rachael to move her body to stimulate energy and to feel the involvement of the whole body while she sang. I suggested repertoire that would support the technical concepts that she was learning. Rachael did not enjoy any of these traditional pedagogical approaches. They proved to be beneficial all the same as Rachael's resistance to pedagogy provided the catalyst for positive transformation that occurred in lesson five.

Even though traditional elements of a singing lesson were not well-received by Rachael, they are a necessary component of any singing lesson. This study involved looking at *combining* traditional vocal pedagogy with spiritual practice. Although we had discussed all aspects of the lessons before we began and Rachael understood the process; although Rachael's desire to improve her voice to the point that it would change her way of presenting herself to the world was sincere; although the difference in Rachael's singing from lesson one to lesson nine was highly notable, we were both working with the element of "resistance". Rachael objected to trying concepts that were new to her and all vocal pedagogy was new to her. Each new idea that I presented required her to use her body in a way that made her feel uncomfortable and self-conscious. In the interview in lesson ten, Rachael recognized that she had a strong urge to resist, *I resist everything. My entire life is just pushing against everything. So this was just another example* (T L 10).

I believe that each student who comes to self-knowledge will have presenting issues that a teacher will need to address, and that those issues will be particular to the student. Davis' (2004) idea of "teaching as occasioning" brought forward the idea of improvising throughout the lesson, allowing the pedagogy to follow the path that the student was taking. In the lessons, that meant applying gentle insistence for ideas that involved traditional pedagogy, while remaining open to whatever pedagogical tool might present itself as helpful. Palmer's (2007) and Jordan's (1999) ideas of teaching in a state of vulnerability and openness offered a way through Rachael's issues

concerning resistance. Because I was aware of this pattern of resistance and accepted it as part of the lesson, I was able to carry on with the pedagogy in a friendly but insistent way until inspiration showed up with the game of “teddy toss”. Remaining open to possibility transformed the learning for both Rachael and me. She gained a stronger, more expressive voice and I learned powerful lessons about relationship and openness in teaching. I also learned the importance of trust in the process; trusting that a solution would eventually appear gave me the patience required to wait for it to happen, instead of madly trying to “think” my way through to a solution.

Fun, Empowerment, and Joy

Three of the themes that emerged from the interviews were that singing was for fun, empowerment, and joy. The element of fun was the factor that shifted Rachael’s learning pattern in lesson five. The fun involved in playing catch with a stuffed animal captured her imagination and lifted her spirits. As soon as this happened, all of the singing in Rachael’s lessons improved dramatically and remained that way for the rest of the lessons. When Rachael listened to the change in her singing on tape, she was empowered to try the concepts I was presenting to her. She breathed deeper, sang with more energy behind her sound, and experimented with song interpretation. Joy was present as her singing took on an air of pleasure. Generally speaking, fun, empowerment, and joy enabled Rachael to say “yes” instead of “no” to my requests.

Hospitality

Hospitality elevated a secular experience such as a singing lesson into a sacred experience during the ten lessons. I used simple details such as a pot of tea, a lit candle, silence, and some personal conversation to create a hospitable, sacred space. This gave Rachael the opportunity to move easily into the lesson time, away from work and other life. It gave us an opportunity to get to know each other, thus establishing mutual trust and the beginnings of a personal relationship. This happened intentionally through conversation at the beginning of the lesson. In a traditional singing lesson, I am conscious of the value of time and have always tended to move quickly into

vocal warm-ups and repertoire. Usually in my lessons, the conversation arising from technique and the interpretation of song brings out discussion of personal life situations: I have found that conversation about an aspect of the song is the quickest way to connect the singer's interpretation to the composer's musical intentions and so I have always made time for conversation in a traditional singing lesson. Rachael continued to ponder our lesson conversations after the lesson had finished. When I asked Rachael about our conversations that connected repertoire to personal situations, she said that she would sometimes feel as if she needed more time for her thoughts to form. She once said, *I can't deal with this right now, so let's just let this percolate* (T L 10). It is significant to me that our conversation promoted processing that continued on after the lesson was finished. Conversation, tea, candles, and my commitment to hospitality created a container of trust where Rachael could express herself freely. As I explore this pedagogy further, I will build time into the beginning of singing lessons to establish personal relationship.

How Far To Push?: Miss Bossy Pants Wonders

In that pivotal week five lesson, when play took over and progress began, Rachael laughingly called me Miss Bossy Pants, as I pushed her to sing larger, fuller than she was accustomed to doing. This is not new in my studio. While I have never been called Miss Bossy Pants before, I have often nudged students beyond their comfort zone. The situation with Rachael was different from a traditional singing lesson because the intention to develop self-knowledge strengthened my commitment to press through resistance. Self-knowledge is often messy; it inevitably requires that one change some aspect of one's life. Although one may express a real desire to change, familiarity has a comfort attached to it. Consequently, a lesson that centres on self-knowledge carries the potential for many blocks. I was constantly balancing the traditional requirements for good singing with her discomfort.

When Rachael expressed her distaste for vowel exercises, I had to decide how far to push. All singing is done primarily on the vowels and exercises on the vowels are essential to every aspect

of vocal development. And so I continued to use vowel exercises, trusting that Rachael would eventually understand their relevance to the process. In writing about this experience, I know that I would do the same thing again if confronted with the same situation. Singers learn to sing on vowel sounds. This is an example of a time when I pressed on with a technique, even though I knew Rachael disliked it.

Another example of pressing onward through resistance was in singing *with* Rachael during exercises and repertoire or playing louder than she was singing. I did this to encourage her to engage more energetically in her singing. She complained often that she couldn't hear herself when I sang with her and that often, the piano accompaniment was too loud. We never really resolved this, as our conversation in lesson ten demonstrated:

Rachael: *One of the things I struggled with, was, when I was singing and you would chime in, I would just match you, instead of doing my own. So that was incredibly frustrating, because I would think, I just need to sing, I want to sing... Marie for the love of God stop singing.*

Marie: *That's so important. And it was important for me to sing with you, for you to go beyond what you're used to singing. Where you had to sing to be heard. And to sing—to a different level. To sing above and beyond where you thought that you could sing. And it pushed you. And you said a couple of times, "This is past my comfort zone." But I wanted the volume. So in week five when I said "I'll do it, and then you do it on your own, that was a turning point". (T L 10)*

When we had this discussion, I remember feeling very sure that I *should* sing with Rachael in a way that would press her to use more breath, more energy, more voice. When I reread the interview, I was taken aback at the level of Rachael's frustration, and recognized an air of self-defense in my response. I will continue to reflect on this dilemma. There are many ways to engage a problem, and I need to look deeper to find ways to encourage stronger vocal response in

a tentative singer. Perhaps Rachael needed to hear herself at the volume that she could manage for a longer time before I pressed her to sing louder. Although I recognize my shortcomings, I also recognize that I had a strong desire to find ways to free Rachael's voice. Because the intent of the sessions was for self-knowledge, I pressed on and so did Rachael. This same process happened when Rachael resisted my requests concerning physical movement, repertoire suggestions, and journaling. In each case, I had to decide how far to push. Each time, good will, perseverance, and openness to possibility were the catalysts for change.

"Teaching As Occasioning" Becoming An Artist

Improvising musically helped Rachael to think of herself as an artist. When she pondered the idea that she had actually "allowed music to form," (T L 8), she was beginning to understand the creative process: we can cooperate with the process, but true creativity invariably comes from inspiration, which requires us to surrender our control of the process. The best we can do to encourage inspiration is simply to be open to the experience. In describing some of the conditions that appear to be present in work that is considered inspired, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) spoke of "the burning curiosity, the wonder at a mystery about to reveal itself, the delight at stumbling on a solution that makes an unsuspected order visible" (p. 5). When Rachael let go of her self-consciousness, she was able to step briefly into this marvelous realm of creativity. All of my efforts to encourage Rachael to imitate my sound were made to initiate baby steps in creative expression. I offered Rachael a larger vocal expression than she was used to, in the hope that she would match it, or move into her own area of self-expression. Goldberg (2001) discussed the use of imitation in fostering creativity. She described how she learned to improvise in blues style through imitation:

As I began my lessons, my teacher played notes on the piano that I had to imitate on the saxophone. He would play, then I would try to play; he would play, I would try to play, and this went on for many lessons I began to contemplate the complexity of

and potential of imitation. Imitation can be a struggle. It can be a search. Imitation can bring on a will of determination. (p. 49)

I used imitation in the lessons with Rachael to provide a different sound, and an example of energetic vocalization. Goldberg (2001) went on to say, “ In successfully matching an outcome, the individual transcends previous limitations” (p. 51). I believe that imitation is a very useful method for opening avenues of creativity. I also think that, like anything else, it is important to listen and respond to the desires of the student. Rachael was very vocal about her dislike of imitation in the lesson.

I hope that Rachael will continue to explore creativity and singing in her life, whether in a group or on her own. In my interview with Victoria Moon Joyce, she said, “If you present the opportunity in as safe as can be context, where it’s fun, or it’s inviting, or as Michelle [George] would say— it’s irresistible, then people will engage to the degree that they feel that they can, that all participation is appropriate, including listening” (T J 4). This is an apt description of what I offered in Rachael’s lessons. The sound improvisations, name games, word-plays, were all new ways to experience herself as an expressive being. For her to have engaged in any way in these creative activities required transformation of will, self-consciousness, judgment and energy levels.

Question Two: Transformation

My second research question involved the process of transformation: *How can vocal training support transformation of the whole person—body, mind, spirit, and voice—within the context of a series of singing lessons?* To address this question, I turned to the work that Rachael and I did in the lessons. I discovered that vocal training can support transformation of the whole person when a holistic approach to the singing lessons is taken. The plan to combine singing lessons with spiritual practice was a natural progression for me, as my adult life to this point has been a

mingling of professional practice with personal philosophy of living. I love this quote from Brother David Steindl-Rast (1995), who said:

Someone will say, ‘ I come alive when I listen to music’ or I come to life when I garden’, or ‘ I come alive when I play golf’. Wherever we come alive, that is the area in which we are spiritual. And then we can say, “ I know at least how one is spiritual in that area.” To be vital, awake, aware, in all areas of our lives, is the task that is never accomplished, but it remains the goal”. (p. 70)

This “coming to life” that Steindl-Rast spoke of happened for Rachael in week five of the lessons when I tossed her the teddy bear, and we began to play. Rachael’s singing came to life in the action of playing. The lessons took on a new liveliness from this moment on. Rachael was able to speak about blocks that had kept her from freely expressing herself, in singing and in other areas of her life. She began to feel better about the way she sounded, and made a tape of her singing as a Christmas gift to her mother. She talked about the possibility of joining a choir or a singing group. In discussing the change in her voice, Rachael said, “Because there is this whole change. Lots of progress (laughter). I think even my speaking voice is louder” (T L 10).

Several elements contributed to transformation in the ten lessons: play, sacred presence in daily life, the combination of spiritual practices and traditional vocal technique, hospitality, the use of silence, and journaling.

Play

Rachael and I were both surprised by the immediate shift of energy in Rachael when we began to play with “Teddy”. I was surprised that she was able to make sense of what had happened almost as soon as it happened and it made me wonder; if Rachael was so ready for change that it could happen in a “teddy toss”, why had she resisted change so vigorously in the first four lessons?

Yoppolo (2002) explained that for learning to be transformative, “risk-taking, relationship, and

reflection” (p. 459) must be present. The experience of introducing a stuffed animal into a lesson was a risk: if I had thought instead of acted, I might not have made the choice to throw a toy around in a lesson situation. It became a connective experience for both of us, and in reflection, we were able to use this experience in the next five lessons to reference what we were doing and how Rachael’s voice was sounding. The fun of tossing “Teddy” opened a way for Rachael to sing with energy, strength, and individual musical expression. Eisner (2002) spoke of the importance of the element of surprise in learning. He explained that:

it is from surprise that we are most likely to learn something.
What is learned can then become a part of the individual’s
repertoire, and once it is a part of that repertoire, new and more
complex problems can be generated and successfully
addressed. (p. 8)

Surprise allowed Rachael to engage in the lesson on her own terms. When she was surprised into engaging her body in her singing, she discovered that it was enjoyable and gave her more options for self-expression. She was willing to try new ideas when I made suggestions, and she showed obvious enjoyment as her voice lightened and expanded with “Teddy” careening through the air. Adults who remember how to play can use play to problem solve. Nachmanovitch (1990) said:

Our play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility.
This is the evolutionary value of play—play makes us flexible.
By reinterpreting reality and begetting novelty, we keep from
being rigid. Play enables us to rearrange our capacities and our
very identity so that they can be used in unforeseen ways. (p. 43)

Rachael was so receptive to the invitation to play with “Teddy.” The fun of it transported the entire lesson into a new place where learning was fun, easy, and relational. Duncan (2007) discussed the “inhibitors” to play. Some of Duncan’s “inhibitors” that I thought might relate to the situation with Rachael in her lessons were “discomfort in group settings ... repression of the inner child ... cultural factors ... fear of making mistakes ... needing to justify actions ...

comparisons ... and feelings of being foolish” (p. 65-66). These were characteristics that I had observed in Rachael through the course of the first five lessons. It seems to me that the element of surprise with “Teddy” released all of these inhibitors to Rachael playing with her voice. Surprise allowed Rachael to use her intelligence, imagination and sense of fun to engage fully in her singing.

Pockets of Sacred Presence

This idea of spirituality bringing us to life reminded me of Wendy Lewela Perkin’s idea that we need to find “pockets of sacred presence” in every day life. (T LP 20). Creating a singing lesson that acknowledged sacred presence gave me an opportunity to offer my gift—the one that brings me to life—in a sacred context. Singing helps me to make sense out of my life; it provides a container for my emotions, and a way for me to love my work every day. Although singing is a large presence in my life, for most people I think it is more like Lewela Perkin’s “pocket of sacred presence”. These “pockets” can have great significance in our lives when one pays attention to what is really happening. Brussat & Brussat (1996) explained:

Part of every day’s spiritual challenge is to decipher the lessons in an encounter on the street corner, an article read during lunch, a problem at work, a phone call from a relative, a television documentary, the criticism of a peer, or the silence just before dawn. We constantly ask, What does this mean? (p. 297)

The ten lessons gave me an opportunity to help Rachael with one aspect of her life—self-expression through singing. Although singing could be referred to as a “pocket” in Rachael’s life, it has the potential to transform her presence in her world. Self-confidence in her singing could lead her to freer expression in her public and private life. The following discussion was part of my interview with Rachael in lesson ten:

Marie: Can you comment on the progress you may or may not have felt happened from day one?

Rachael: *Mhmm. I don't even know how to answer that, because all you have to do is listen to lesson one and lesson six, and go, "Excuse me, who are you (laughter)? (T L 10)*

The ten lessons provided enough information and experience for Rachael to begin to change the way she expressed herself. Even though she remained critical of her singing, she also enjoyed her singing and enjoyed listening to herself on tape. The changes made during the lesson time were dramatic and tangible enough for me to feel confident in saying that transformation had indeed occurred. For lasting change to occur, I think that lessons would need to continue on a regular basis for a sustained period of time.

Combining Spiritual and Vocal Practices

The relationship that developed between Rachael and me was crucial in providing the change necessary for Rachael to develop self-expression through singing. This relationship was crafted through the conscious observation of spiritual practices during the lessons. Although this is an unconventional use for spiritual practice, it helped me as a teacher to soften some of the hard edges that Rachael encountered as she struggled with the requirements of singing technique. The combined use of spiritual technique and vocal pedagogy made me think of Palmer (2007) when he spoke of the use of paradox in teaching strategy. He said that an idea need not be this *or* that, but instead it can be this *and* that. In discussing the paradox of identity perception, he said:

What are we to do with the limits we find on the flip side of our gifts? The point is not to "get fixed" but to gain deeper understanding of the paradox of gifts and limits, the paradox of our mixed selves, so that we can teach, and live, more gracefully within the whole of our nature. (Palmer, p. 74)

The ten singing lessons with Rachael proved that a singing lesson could be both this: training in producing beautiful singing, and that: learning about aspects of ourselves using singing as the vehicle for perception. Self-expression in a freer, larger sense can be the result when we sing for the purpose of self-discovery. Both Davis (2004) and Palmer (2007) spoke about the spiritual

dimension in living and learning. Davis (2004) said that research into the power of ritual, a common spiritual practice, has shown that our brains have the capacity to recognize moments of spiritual connection. He explained:

Why might humans be physiologically predisposed to feelings of transcendence? It happens because there *are* transcendent unities of which we are always and already part. In being aware of their selves and all of nature, humans are one of the means by which nature is conscious of itself. (p. 159)

Because Rachael and I were both open to the presence of spirituality in the ten lessons we were ready for the transformation that took place in Rachael's singing with the introduction of play and surprise in week five.

More Hospitality

I have already discussed hospitality under the heading of "what worked" in the ten lessons, but I believe that it played an important role in the combining of spiritual practice and vocal pedagogy as well. Conscious nurturing of hospitable practice gave the lessons an air of grace that helped me be patient with Rachael when I didn't understand her reticence. Lighting a candle before Rachael came in for her lesson helped me to remember that I was creating a sacred space: that I was trusted with more than Rachael's voice, and that required a degree of humility from me. When I asked Rachael about the use of hospitality, she said that she loves candles and uses them a lot at home, and so they didn't register as special to her. However, she always appreciated the tea *because it's not, get right to the piano ... it's have tea, sit down; it gave me a chance to bridge between coming in and getting started, so that was always a good thing* (T L 10).

Silence And Processing

The use of silence slowed the learning process, so that there was more time built into the lesson for thoughts and feelings to emerge. As a result, observations could be acknowledged and discussed during the lesson time. The silence offered a brief space in time for creative thought to

enter; for example when we did the “sound wash” in lesson six. A “sound wash” is an improvisational play with vowel sounds. For this exercise, Rachael and I sat silent for almost two minutes. When she felt ready to begin, she improvised a melody using the vowel sounds in her name. Her composition was creative, expressive, and freely produced. She began and finished it on her own terms. The silence helped to open her to creative possibilities and it focused the exercise on her expressive capacity.

Resonance, Breathing, and the Singing Bowl

The crystal singing bowl offered a unique sound opportunity for Rachael, and it appealed to her very much. There was obvious pleasure in her voice as she sang while the bowl was ringing. The humming from the singing bowl stayed with her through the week, as she was willing to continue the humming exercise after the lesson had finished. It was interesting to notice that humming with the singing bowl slowed down Rachael’s breathing. In doing so, she was more conscious of taking a deeper breath before she vocalized. I found the humming exercise and the deep, conscious breathing exercises to be very effective for their pedagogical value and for their spiritual value. To breathe deeply is to prepare properly to sing. To tune into the intense resonance of the crystal singing bowl is to make stronger your connection to your own resonance capacity. I wish to continue exploring ways to use the crystal singing bowl to enhance technique, and open avenues for personal expression.

Journaling

Personal journaling is a spiritual practice that I have used for much of my adult life. I began this practice with a dream journal but I now use journal writing to reflect on all aspects of my life. I found that journaling about the lessons was very helpful to me as a teacher, and I have continued that practice more consistently now with all of my singing students. Journaling was not helpful to Rachael during the lessons. I had suggested that she keep a common-place book of her lesson experiences, and I gave her opportunities to journal weekly during the lessons. Although Rachael

is someone who journals, she wasn't motivated to write during the lessons. I didn't press her, but always offered the opportunity for written reflection. I have never done this before in a lesson situation, and so the conclusion I can draw at this point, is that journaling will not always be useful for a student. Bressler (2004) said "we can think only with what we know 'in our bones,' and that attending to the sensory, followed by reflection, is a valuable source of such knowledge" (p. 162). Instead of journaling, I used a lot of questioning, (how does that feel for you? what comes up for you?): questions designed to link conscious and sub-conscious thought to the singing. Use of random words and phrases after singing a portion of the song also helped to free thought processes, although they were not activities that Rachael enjoyed. I would like to look further into the use of journaling with singing lessons in the future, to see if there are more effective ways for a teacher to present journaling as part of the lessons experience.

New Rooms

Both Rachael and I experienced personal transformation in our ten lessons together. Rachael's transformation is most evident in the increased capacity and beauty of her singing voice and in a measure of self-confidence that she can build as she proceeds with her singing. In lesson ten, we listened to her singing "Song For A Winter's Night." Rachael was surprised at her tone, and she said, *That's a beautiful sound. It doesn't sound like me* (T L 10). I responded, *It does [sound like you]. It sounds like new Rachael. It sounds like moving into new rooms in your voice. But to move into those rooms, you have to be willing to go there, and I don't think you're completely comfortable yet. Even so, the sound is fabulous* (T L 10). We carried on talking about resistance to new ideas, and about judging. I said, *If you're judging, it limits what you can find when you explore.* Rachael responded, *that in a nutshell is it. If you limit what you explore, you limit everything and that is one of the battles for me.* (T L 10).

Relating The Lessons To Theory

Once Rachael and I had stumbled through lessons one to five, I was able to recognize the theories that I had examined prior to the lessons. I relied on Ruskan's (1999) theory of *Emotional clearing* to help me understand the resistance that we encountered as we progressed from lesson one to lesson four. I understood Rachael's strong reaction to discussing Kermit the Frog and the "Rainbow Connection" in lesson two and her refusal to do any physical action while singing in lessons one to four as examples of Ruskan's idea that life experiences have occurred and have been resisted, "the energy is unable to be released because it has been blocked rather than absorbed; it cannot complete its cycle, *it cannot discharge into consciousness*" [emphasis in original] (pp. 23-24). When everything turned upside down in week five and she shifted rapidly from saying "no" to saying "yes." I took this to mean that the original emotional block had been "discharged into consciousness." Rachael was free to make different choices, and she did so consistently and with enthusiasm for the next five lessons.

Ruskan's theory of emotional clearing fit clearly into the first five lessons. In week six, when Rachael and I listened to the tape of week five, we were able to name what happened, and this is where Mezirow's theory of transformative learning came in. During my data analysis of the ten lessons, I came upon articles that discussed ways that Mezirow's (1978) original theory of transformation is changing. Imel (1998) described how Mezirow's views have been criticized for their emphasis on rational thought, with little recognition of the importance of "an intuitive, creative, emotional process" (Imel, *Another Perspective*, para. 2, 1998). She said that rational modes of thinking could not successfully craft a creative self-image. Where Ruskan's theory provided the emotional bridge necessary to make sense of what happened, Mezirow's three stages that are necessary for transformative learning to occur fit the lesson five experience in the following way: (a) The "teddy toss" could be considered *a disorienting dilemma*. (b) After our singing game, when Rachael and I moved back to the piano, she sang "The Rainbow Connection"

four keys higher than before. In this way, she *took on the role* of someone who could sing higher and stronger than before. (c) By the end of lesson nine, she was able to say:

All the restriction in my voice wasn't my voice. It was me damping it down. The resistance was me—it wasn't about anything else. So it's all about being heard, and do I have anything worth saying, and speaking loudly. (T L 9)

I see this as an example of the *emergence of new beliefs*. If nothing other than this new self-concept had emerged, I would have considered the lessons worthwhile.

Personal Transformation

I cannot say how lasting the transformation in Rachael will be. That is beyond the scope of this study, and is dependant upon many factors besides singing and self-expression. Because we both entered the lesson process with the understanding that we were working on sacred ground, there was more depth to the learning than in a traditional singing lesson. A seed was planted for Rachael. The experience of singing the lessons helped her to recapture childhood fun and play that had been buried under years of getting through life. She was able to name blocks in her growth process, and in the lesson time, she demonstrated that she had the capacity to move beyond those blocks. I believe that the energy generated in her transformative experience, lesson five, was strong enough to imprint her soul as it did mine.

Transformation has moved into my singing lessons, both in private and group settings. As I go out the door to my singing studio, I find myself carting around noisemakers, shakers, a djembe to demonstrate rhythmic patterns, stuffed animals, slinky toys, breathing balls, juggling balls, a basketball—these toys demonstrate everything from phrasing to volume production and range extension. I now use these instruments and toys to loosen a singer's preconceived notions about sound production and have found that almost everyone has a positive response to this type of play pedagogy. Since the ten lessons, I am journaling more at the end of a singing lesson; jotting down words that entered my head as the lesson progressed, and suggesting ideas that may work in

future lessons. I have had the courage to begin singing lessons with a young man with Down syndrome. This young man's singing is providing me with further lessons on the joy of singing. As I finish this study and move forward with this pedagogy, I hope to explore more thoroughly recent developments in transformational learning.

Question Three: Pedagogy

The third research question was, *When the goal of singing lessons is shifted from the development of the singing voice to the development of self-knowledge in the singer, how does this affect pedagogy?* To answer this question, I turned to aspects of complexity theory to understand the implications of my conclusions.

Shifting Perspectives

A traditional singing lesson aims to enable the singer to produce beautiful, expressive tone. The shift in perspective from developing beautiful tone to developing self-knowledge gave me a deepened understanding of the nature of relationship between teacher and student. I have explored student/teacher relationship in terms of complexity theory, and I believe that the lessons with Rachael can be termed complex. Davis (2004) defined complexity theory as a study of "life and living systems" (p. 104). He explained that in a complex system, it is not possible to predict the outcome of a dynamic situation because objects may relate to each other in unpredictable ways, presenting outcomes that could not have been foreseen. For example:

A complex phenomenon is self-organizing, meaning that it is composed of and arises in the co-implicated activities of individual agents. It is not the sum of its parts—an object; it is the product of its parts and the interactions—an interobject... .Complexity is not just an acknowledgement of a new category of non-deterministic phenomena, but an assertion that analytic methods are not sufficient to understand such phenomena".
(p. 151)

My lessons with Rachael fit this description. As the teacher, I could provide an invitation to learn, and as the student, Rachael could say yes to this invitation. From there however the relationship between us, as teacher and student, became the driving force in the lessons. In their book, *Getting to maybe*, Wesley, Zimmerman and Patton (2006) offered the example of raising a child as a complex problem. They said, “But parenting is complex. Unlike baking a cake [simple problem] or sending a rocket to the moon, [complicated problem], there are no clear rules to guarantee success” (p. 10). Each child has specific needs, and so the same formula may not work with a second child. The parent cannot control every aspect of the child’s life and so the parent’s degree of influence changes as the child responds to the outside pressures. “Almost always, the parent and child interact to create outcomes” (p. 10). This description relates to the ten lessons with Rachael, as I struggled to find ways to engage Rachael and she struggled to accept methods that she did not appear to enjoy. Our relationship as student/teacher and as two people who had committed to a mutual research project influenced the outcomes of all vocal experimentation. Goodwill is a great motivator, and it presided as the principle stimulus in every lesson. Because of this, we were able to move beyond Rachael’s resistance and my consternation. Wesley, Zimmerman and Patton said, “In connecting to the world, even in the smallest ways, we engage its complexity and we begin to shift the pattern around us as we ourselves begin to shift. Social innovation begins where the individual and the system meet” (p. 19). This happened for Rachael and me in lesson five, when she expressed her frustration with the traditional singing practice of vocalizing on vowels. By lesson five, Rachael and I were both in a limbo where nothing was working. However, we were both able to remain open to the possibility of change. Spotting the teddy bear on the piano reminded me of a fun way to present vocal technique to children. When the opportunity for play presented itself, I was ready for it, and Rachael went with me. Wesley, Zimmerman and Patton said:

It takes courage to engage and stay engaged; it takes courage to act in the absence of certainty and clarity ... by paying attention

to how and when we engage ... we do more than pull down a few walls: we engage with possibility, we engage with what may be. And seeming miracles become possible. (p. 19)

Our determination in that pivotal lesson positively shifted her singing and self-perception in a dramatic way. Furthermore, the change that occurred in those few minutes of a lesson changed the course, in a positive way, of the next five lessons.

When I attended a pedagogy course at the Voicecare Network, (St. Johns University, Minnesota, 2004), the staff used the term “senior learner” for the teacher, and “junior learner” for the student. A team of instructors attended every session and each instructor listened and commented where appropriate as another instructor facilitated the session. They explained that we are all on a continuum of learning and some of us have acquired more information than others. I have reflected on this idea many times through the course of this study, as I searched for ways to open up learning for Rachael. I think it is probably true in most teaching situations. As a teacher, if one is truly open to the needs of the student or students before one, then that teacher is constantly adjusting the instruction to the immediate situation. That means that every lesson can be fresh. If a teacher can suspend personal judgment of a situation, solutions can arise that may not be available to a mind that is certain of a result. Trust enters into the dynamic of the lesson. Trust in the process, and in the mutual goodwill of teacher and student can lead to solutions that may not be apparent to a closed mind.

Palmer (1993) also discussed the unpredictability of dynamic relationships. He said that science has proved that it is not possible to accurately determine the action between two dynamic objects. He said:

Some philosophers of science now argue that we can make no rigid distinction between the knower and the known, that every scientific finding is a mixture of “subjective” and “objective” elements. In atomic physics we now understand that the very

process of measurement shapes our picture of the thing being measured, that the outcomes of any experiment are determined as much by the process of experimentation as by the nature of the object in question. (pp. 27-28)

When Rachael and I found a solution through our dilemma in a moment of play, the momentum from that experience carried us through to many innovations in the remaining five sessions. The “process of experimentation” that Palmer referred to could be our mutual engagement in playful learning. The outcome for Rachael was increased vocal capacity and range of self-expression. The outcome for me was an experience of complexity theory at work: the demonstration of the unpredictable power of relationship in teaching.

Implications and Questions For Further Research

In completing this study, I realize that my understanding of what should happen in a traditional singing lesson has changed and that I have adopted strategies that might work for other people. Other singing teachers might consider trading efficient practice for practice that enhances relationship. If one stops looking at the clock it is possible to focus more intently on what is occurring in the present moment of a lesson. Asking open-ended questions that guide a student to notice more and respond more specifically to technical issues can sharpen both a teacher and a student’s understanding of process. The process of which I speak could be in relation to either traditional vocal technique or self-knowledge. A teacher can continue to ask questions until a student is able to make the voice connection move from the mind to the body. When this connection occurs, spirit is never far behind. Taking the time to reflect after a lesson can uncover strategies that a teacher can use to enhance what occurred in the lesson. All of this requires extra time, but it makes every lesson a potentially rich and unusual experience. I believe that looking deeply at my own practice has strengthened my teaching in every area of traditional vocal pedagogy. The experience chronicled in this study is a valuable road map to any private music instructor who wishes to make a richer experience of the lesson.

Other researchers investigating vocal pedagogy can benefit from the process I engaged in during the ten lessons. When the researcher is intimately involved in the research, it is possible to create a responsive, unpredictable pedagogy in which curriculum is shaped dialogically by student and teacher in an intimate evolving relationship.

For those who are interested in holistic education, the three key informants (Patteson, Lewela Perkins, and Joyce) offered many examples of ways to combine spiritual practice and singing lessons. The ten lessons with Rachael showed that a singing lesson can be a small offering of sacred life in the middle of busy secular life. Without infringing upon the realm of therapy, a singing lesson that focuses on self-knowledge can be therapeutic. Singing can be a way to remember who we are and what made us who we are, making us more whole.

Those who practice spiritual direction could use singing as part of their work. Singing and self-knowledge could be used in combination with spiritual direction, either in a private session or possibly in a workshop setting. Because I feel that the combination of singing lessons and spiritual practice worked together as well as it did, I believe it should be possible to take a similar approach in developing singing and self-knowledge into a group-oriented format. Such an approach could include skills for developing creativity, self-expression, and ultimately a healthy self-esteem. If the group were a choir, the approach could also enrich the spirit of the ensemble as a whole.

Further research might investigate how the development of self-knowledge could affect personal self-esteem. This research has demonstrated to me the importance of exploring ways to create joy through singing. I love working with singers who are capable of great technical expertise and vocal expression and have been privileged to do this for much of my professional career. The interviews with Patteson, Lewela Perkins, and Joyce have opened questions for me about singing with people for the purpose of expressive freedom and creating joyfully in community. I wish to

explore other practitioners' views on singing and holism. I believe that there is great potential for further research into singing and self-expression.

Concluding Remarks

The knowledge I have gained from thirty years of teaching goes hand in hand with my sense of being a rank amateur at the start of each new class (Palmer, 2007, p. 66).

For all of the time I have spent studying singing, developing ways to engage a student's mind and imagination, for all of the books I have read, workshops I have taken, master classes attended, I was not really prepared for the way the ten lessons with Rachael would unfold. Perhaps it is not possible to prepare for pedagogy that invites unpredictability as part of its mandate. Because the lessons were centered on developing self-expression, I drew on every resource I could think of to encourage Rachael to sing and be heard. My surprise at her resistance brought my brain into overdrive as I tried to *think* my way through the problem. I now think that the *experience* of remaining open to inspiration in Rachael's week five lesson brought me to a deeper, expanded understanding of vocal pedagogy. Put another way, I do not have to think of everything! Solutions can present themselves when you are open to receiving them. Many educational theorists have said this: (Jordan (1999), Csikszentmihaly (1996), Davis (2004), Palmer (2007)). I think I have always conducted my choir rehearsals in a way that invites creativity. I am accustomed to singers loving their lessons, and so I believe a certain amount of the same chemistry is present in most of my traditional teaching experiences. In a choir rehearsal, there are so many things on which one must concentrate simultaneously, I feel as if my brain naturally gets into line with my body and my spirit. This is a place in my life, where body, mind, and spirit function to create what is needed in the moment. If I have prepared my notes and ideas well before the rehearsal, I can be quite certain that inspiration will lead the choir and me through a successful musical experience. The lessons with Rachael became an opportunity for the same experience on a one-to-one student/teacher basis. In reflection, it is interesting to me to note that

inspiration does not come in choir rehearsal without the willing involvement of choir members. Similarly, when Rachael was reticent about trying new ideas, inspiration was in short supply as I worked hard to *think* my way through the problem. To remain “in the moment.” allowing inspiration to appear, seems to be a relational process. Teacher and student involvement is necessary for success. When singing allows for knowing to occur, transformation has entered the process.

To find ways to help someone come to a freer range of self-expression is a humbling assignment. I am honoured to have engaged with Rachael in this process. I wish her continued progress as she voices her truth: in song, in community, with family, friends, and in the sanctuary of her heart. I have learned much. I have much to learn.

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Appendix A: LETTERS OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Letter of Information for Singing Student

DATE

Dear [NAME OF INVITED PARTICIPANT]

Thank you for your interest in this research project. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. To fulfill my degree requirements, I am researching vocal pedagogy that places self-knowledge at the center of the investigation. I will be examining traditional vocal pedagogy as a basis for transformation of body, mind and spirit. This research has been cleared by the General Research Ethics Board of Queen's University.

As a participant, you would agree to take part in 10 consecutive lessons, once a week, beginning in September 2008. Each lesson would last for 45 minutes. In that time, we would explore a combination of traditional vocal technique and spiritual practices, as well as learning repertoire that is mutually agreed upon. **These ten lessons will be in my home studio, and they will be videotaped.** The videotapes will not be transcribed. I will view them, and I may ask you to view them as well, after five lessons, and then again after all 10 lessons have been completed. No one else will view the videotapes. My thesis advisor and committee member may view portions of the tape with your permission. Your name will not appear on any material related to this research.

I would ask you to keep a journal of your experience of the lessons, noticing anything that may be happening in the framework of the lesson. No other person other than my thesis advisor, committee member, and myself will have access to this material. I would also ask you to read my journal notes, so that you might have an opportunity to comment upon my observations, and make suggestions about where our inquiry might go next.

I anticipate that your involvement in this project will require approximately two hours a week for the duration of the ten weekly singing lessons. This includes the actual lesson time, journaling, and viewing of the videotaped material.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data. The singing lessons however would continue, if you so wish. I do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. However, this type of singing lesson can be emotionally demanding. I am aware that you have family and professional support in place if needed.

This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, books, and instructional materials. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. If the data are made available to other researchers for secondary analysis, your identity will never be disclosed.

I will ensure that you have a copy of the data upon completion of the project: tentatively by June of 2009.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Marie Anderson at 613-531-0814, or my supervisor, Dr. Katharine Smithrim, 613-533-6000, ext. 77762, email katharine.smithrim@queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics

of this study, contact the Education Research Ethics Board at ereb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613- 533- 6081 (chair.greb@queensu.ca).

I would like to have an indication of informed consent, should you agree to take part in this research. This will make it clear to me and to my advisors that you understand the nature of my inquiry and the way that it will be conducted. **I have attached two copies of a consent form to this letter. If you would like to participate in this study, please sign one form and return it to me in the envelope I have provided, and save the other copy for your personal records.** I have also enclosed video consent forms. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me.

I look forward to our lessons and the exchange of information that will take place with you throughout this project.

Sincerely,

Marie Anderson

Telephone 613-531-0814

Email 6MLTA@queensu.ca

Letter of Information for the Interviewees In This Study

DATE

Dear [NAME OF PARTICIPANT]

Thank you for your interest in this research project. I am a graduate student at the faculty of education at Queen's University. To fulfill my degree requirements, I am researching vocal pedagogy that places self-knowledge at the center of the investigation. I will be examining traditional vocal pedagogy as a basis for transformation of body, mind and spirit

I am requesting a live taped interview with you as a means of gathering data for this study. I will send the interview questions in advance, and I estimate that the interview will be one and a half hours in length. **The interview will be held at a time and place of your choice.** The transcribed material will be sent to you, so that you can revise or expand on anything that you have said, correct any errors in the transcription, and make any other suggestions concerning the material.

As an interviewee, you have the option to be identified or remain anonymous. If you wish to remain anonymous, I will assign a pseudonym to your data, and your name will not appear in any data. No person other than my thesis advisor, committee member, and myself will have access to this material.

I do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. **Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer, and if you wish data to be removed, I will delete any files that contain your data.**

This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, books, and instructional materials from schools.

I will ensure that you have a copy of the results of the research upon completion of the research: tentatively by June of 2009.

I would like to have an indication of informed consent, should you like to take part in this present research. This will make it clear to me and my advisors that you understand the nature of my inquiry and the way that it will be conducted. **I have attached two consent forms to this letter. If you would like to participate in this study, please sign one form and return it to me in the envelope I have provided, and save the other copy for your personal file.** If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Marie Anderson at 613-531-0814, or my supervisor, Dr. Katharine Smithrim, 613-533-6000, ext. 77762, email katharine.smithrim@queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Education Research Ethics Board at ereb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613- 533- 6081 (chair.greb@queensu.ca).

I look forward to the exchange of ideas on this topic that is very dear to me.

Sincerely,

Marie Anderson

Telephone 613-531-0814

Email 6MLTA@queensu.ca

Letter of Consent for Interviewees

I agree to participate in the study entitled *Developing self-knowledge through singing lessons*, conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen's University.

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information, and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that, upon request, I may have a full description of the results of the study after its completion.

I understand that the researchers intend to publish the findings of the study.

I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that if I wish to remain anonymous, that my responses will be kept confidential, and that measures will be taken so that my identity is protected.

I am aware that I can contact the researcher, Marie Anderson, at 613-531-0814 if I have any questions about this project, and I am aware that for questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Education Research Ethics Board at ereb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, 613-533-6081 (chair.greb@queensu.ca).

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date Telephone number.....

I AGREE TO BE IDENTIFIED BY NAME IN ANY PUBLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH.

Signature:

Letter of Consent for Singing Student

I agree to participate in the study entitled *Developing self-knowledge through singing lessons*, conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen's University.

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information, and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that, upon request, I may have a full description of the results of the study after its completion.

I understand that the researchers intend to publish the findings of the study.

I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences.

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I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date Telephone number.....

Appendix B: LESSON PLANS FROM WEEK ONE TO WEEK 9

Week One

Dear Rachael,

Your soul has its own song. Your unique energy and purpose are expressed through your talents, passions, and visions. When you're in touch with your joy and act upon it, your heart feels full and your life is rewarding. Even when you're distracted by fears and troubles of the world, your song still lives inside you. (Alan Cohen, 2002, p. 4).

“Self expression with the voice can access our deepest, most profound sense of who we are” (Thurman, 2000, p. 175). One way that we can access this deepest part of ourselves is to remember and sing the songs that have been important to us in our lives. Think of a song that has been important to you in your life. What memories does it hold for you?

What emotions are you aware of as you think of this song?

Can you think of ways that this song is still relevant to your life today?

Final Thought:

Week Two

Dear Rachael,

Wisdom is the guardian of our choices. It helps us to discern the right path at the right moment. It gives us clarity of thought and deeper understanding. We use our best judgment, resisting the pull of impulse and desire. Wisdom gives us the maturity and patience to make sustainable decisions. We seek knowledge, enter reflection and open ourselves to inspiration. Wisdom takes us beyond thought to a deeper knowing. (The Virtues Project)

Singing the Rainbow Connection last week set us up with a natural connection to wisdom. After you sang through the song, you commented on the simple wisdom of the words. I think we both felt the power of the song in connection to your early life and to your life now. Please listen to the song now.

Where does it take you (in thoughts, emotions, reflections)?

Write down words that pop into your mind as you hear this song.

Use the extra sheet [in your binder] to write anything that pops into your mind. No one will read this, and you are free to throw out the sheet when we are finished this session.

Week Three

Dear Rachael,

We are gradually working towards a vocalization that is full-voiced: where you are present to the sound of your voice in producing vowels and long tones. I am aware of the resistance you have toward this exercise, and I honour the work that goes into every vocalization you make. As we sing vowels today, please take note and jot down thoughts and feelings that arise on the different exercises:

AH

OH

OO

AY

EE

I have copied the James Taylor song that you requested [Fire and Rain], and would like you to look at some of his other songs. Is there another song in the songbook or other material that would interest you as well? Can you comment on the other repertoire?

Sound is simply air vibrating (diagram of a head showing resonance vibrations of the singing voice)

The trachea (windpipe) is just under our skin in front of our lower necks. At the top of the trachea is our larynx, which holds our vocal cords. When we breathe to sing, we inhale air through our trachea. As we exhale, the air passes through the larynx. The larynx interrupts the air and sets the air vibrating. This results in our beautiful singing! (Conable, 2000, p. 24)

Week Four

Dear Rachael,

Today we will continue the vocalizations we have begun on specific vowels, and will look at the James Taylor song, “Fire and Rain”. As we go along, I ask you to think about the lyrics that you are singing, and jot down any words or phrases that pop out to you. Feel free to speak any of these, or write them down—whichever is your preference. If we have time, we’ll also look at the Bonnie Raitt song, “I Can’t Make You Love Me”.

Fire and Rain:

I Can’t Make You love Me:

Final Thoughts

Week Five

Dear Rachael,

We are half-way through our research lessons. We have vocalized, connecting the sound to the body, recalled music and lyrics that may draw out emotions, and named them as they occur. At times we have decided to move in a different direction, consciously leaving certain memories that

have been evoked, to rest as they are. You have spoken and written observations as they occurred. Together we have played with the sound of your voice, using vowels that slide, open wide in tone and change emotionally. You have willingly experimented with sound in ways that you may not have thought about before we began these sessions. Your vocal range has increased, as we move gradually into your head voice, and we are working on strengthening your endurance capacity. We continue to move toward a place where you will be comfortable expressing yourself in a more public form, sharing your lovely voice with others, and feeling confident to express your opinion to others. I appreciate your willingness to engage in the activities that I offer to you—even when you are clearly uncomfortable with them.

Here is our plan for today:

I would like to build on the B flat hum that we began last week with the singing bowl. Close your eyes, and hum the B flat below middle C, noticing where you feel the vibration in your body.

Is there any way that you can intensify that vibration: make it get louder and softer? If so, how are you doing it?

If not, what do you sense is holding the sound from changing?

Let's open that sound up into a vowel. Which vowel do you choose to open into?

What sensations occur as you open into a vowel?

Can you sustain the sound for an extended period of time?

What do you have to do to sustain the sound?

How does this experience of sustained sound make you feel?

Is this an exercise that you may be willing to do outside the studio lesson?

Repertoire:

Final Thoughts

Week Six

There were no sheets in week six.

Week Seven

Singing Yourself Free

Music has the capacity to touch the innermost reaches of the soul and music gives flight to the imagination (Plato in Cameron, p. 20,)

Music speaks to the wounds we have no words for. It heals where all else fails...Sound healing is simply using sound consciously. It is perceiving sound for what it is, energy. Our own voice, used therapeutically can heal what ails us and others (Cameron, p. 161)

Rachael, pick a topic in which you feel you have been deeply stuck. Take a minute to center yourself with deep and steady breathing. Then allow yourself to sing songs related to your feelings. Continue this until you feel an energy shift. Take the time to calm and center yourself at the song's end as well.

Doubt yourself, and you doubt everything you see. Judge yourself and you see judges everywhere. But if you listen to the sound of your own voice, you can rise above doubt and judgment. And you can see forever (Nancy Kerrigan in Cameron, p.).

Rachael, for five minutes each day, hum or sing *The Rainbow connection*. Listen to your beautiful dark brown velvet voice as you sing. If you feel up to it, play a bit with the dynamics, tempo, and the way you and Kermit interpret the song. Do you have a recording of Kermit? You can find it

easily on Youtube. Recognize that these affirming feelings that you call up are a valid, authentic part of yourself that can be stronger than your self-doubting and self-judging part of yourself.

Week 8

Breath

“Matters of the spirit are simply, matters of the breath” (Davis, 2004, p.159). When considered this way, a fundamental element of spirituality and singing is shared in the breath. Observation of deep intentional breathing is the foundation of all good singing, and for any meditative practice.

“When we begin to attend to our breath, we attend to ourselves in the most elemental way”

(Davis, 2004, p. 159) Today as we vocalize and sing songs, let’s attend, in a very physical way, to your breath.

Final Thoughts

Week Nine

A New Year, A New Voice

Dear Rachael,

We are coming to the end of our ten sessions. We have journeyed through many vocalizations on vowels, breathing, and range extension. Through all of this, you have moved from singing very low and sad songs, (*I can't make you love me, and 10,000 miles*) to *Rainbow Connection* to *Once in royal David's city*, and *Silent night*. Mid-way through the session (lesson 5) you had a beautiful break-through where the voice soared over any concerns, as you played and laughed and sang with Teddy. From there, we started to progress rapidly with the singing of Christmas carols: the voice moving with more energy, expression and pleasure. You began to actively seek a higher range, and a tone that was as beautiful as you could make it.

As we sing today, I will call on you to remember those times when you were determined to lift the voice higher and sing with determination and energy.

Let's begin, once a once again, and as always, with the breath.