

The Healing Powers of Danced Song

Selections from the Article in “Kreise Ziehen”, 2001.

As a doctor, naturopath, and song therapist, the healing aspects of my work are of the utmost importance to me. I have searched my whole life for methods of healing, in order to help people. It is why I studied medicine, and why I became involved in astrology, natural healing, and many other subjects. Song and dance remained my primary hobbies throughout my studies, and I also completed a classic voice training. The methods of healing I employed became increasingly focused on the energetic as years went by. I turned my attention to homeopathy and acupuncture. The energising and healing effects of singing soon thereafter became my main vocational calling and my life goal, which I have been pursuing over seventeen years. I have combined dancing and movement with breathing therapy, toning, rituals, and dance, thus shaping my personal brand of healing, in which my own joy in the process has played an integral part.

Singing and toning are highly direct forms of expression. Through singing and toning I experience my inner self, get in touch with the core of my being, and can make myself heard and felt. I cannot hide myself, I am present, and in this naked truth I am both strong and vulnerable. Singing and being sung to, especially with spiritual chants, brings blocked energies into a state of heightened vibration. Emotions start to flow freely, bodily discomforts dissipate. Healing can occur.

To tone, sing, and dance together elevates all participants into a higher energetic state, and creates a tight bond with one another. It doesn't matter what I look like, how my voice sounds, it is joy and love that binds us together. Again and again, participants from seminars have reported a heightened energy persisting for weeks, even months, after a seminar or session. The songs I employ are usually centred around mother earth and spirituality. Some examples:

1. The River is Flowing

Despite having already sung this song countless times, it has never once bored me. Again and again, this song has managed to touch myself and others deeply. It is important for me to sing this song in German (which sometimes meets with some resistance), as it offers a wholly different emotional quality as

the English version, which flows differently.

Dance Movements

“The River...”: Grapevine Step / Mayim Step clockwise.

“down to the sea...”: One step to the centre and back, hands swinging along.

“Mother (Earth) carry me...”: Child rolls to the right in the mother’s arm and is rocked.

“Down to the sea...”: The child swirls right out of the mother’s embrace, ending up one place down the circle. In the second part of the dance, every first person will be the mother, and the second the child. Thus, the children ‘roll’ through the circle! These roles can afterwards be switched around.

Effects

Tears and emotions start flowing, the experience of being carried is felt deeply, as is the theme of mother and child. A loving closeness comes into being, as well as a lot of joy and laughter. It is interesting, how each woman has her own brand of rocking movement and every child feels differently.

2. Gaté gaté

There are several melodies to this song. For this dance, the traditional melody is used.

Dance Movements

“Gaté gate...”: RLRL steps clockwise. Hands opened from the heart, repeated two times.

„Paragaté...“: Turn body to the centre, hands held in a circle in Stupa-stance. Take four steps outward, RLRL.

„Parasamgaté...“: Four small steps back towards the centre.

„Bodhisvaha...“: All turn once to the right around the own axis, then bows towards the middle, hands folded together as if in prayer.

Effects

Slow and repeated singing of this ancient mantra (‘going, going, to enlightenment’) sends the body into deep vibrations. The vocals open great spaces around us filled with overtones. Repeatedly singing such simple chants sends one into a trancelike state. It is like meditation, halting conscious thought. The communal dance steps are like a common prayer.

It brings great inner peace and tranquillity. As we sing this Sanskrit chant, we join a tradition stretching back thousands of years. It is said that new Mantras (like “Ich bin”) do not have the same healing effects as mantras and song that have been continuously sung for millennia.

3. Hallelujah

This canon from Taizé is well-known.

Dance Movements

“Hallelujah, hallelu, hallelujah...“: Hands held out in W-shape. Counterclockwise Walz, RLR-LRL-.

“Hallelujah, halleluu-jaa...“: Body turned to the centre, rocking movements, RLRL.

The above two steps are repeated.

“Haa-lee-luu-jaa...“: Four steps towards the centre, RLRL. Slowly raise both arms.

“Haa-lee-luu-jaa...“: Rocking movements, RLRL. Arms move along like palm leaves.

“Haa-lee-luu-jaa...“: Four steps backward, slowly lowering both arms.

“Hallelujah, halleluu-jaa...“: Body turned to the centre, rocking movements, RLRL.

Effects

Singing this song is always an overpowering experience. This mantra contains all overtone vibrations. To experience strongly sung overtone is highly beneficial for one's health. They activate very refined processes within our aura. The vibrations from the vocals enter into resonance with our chakras. At the conference "Spirituality in everyday life" in Iserlohn in 2003 we had the opportunity to sing this song in a chapel. One half of the group danced, and the other half stood on the balustrade, singing and spontaneously waving their arms like palm leaves. This resulted in a ceaseless entwining of song and dance.

This song opens the heart, an affirmation to oneself and to each other. The communal dancing unites all participants into a single dancing and singing body.

4. Tief in die Erde wie ein Baum geht mein Weg, hoch in den Himmel wie ein Baum geht mein Weg

This simple song originates from the peace movement. I like to accompany it with a shamanic drum. All participants are invited to freely move through the room in whichever way they like, and to consciously experience the earth under their feet. It offers a possibility to become more deeply aware of one's inner self. After singing this song and moving freely, the inner tree looks quite differently. Participants remark that "the roots have deepened", "The branches bear fruit", "I feel like I have more space", or "I am thoroughly clearheaded and physically relaxed".

Singing and dancing or movement belong together in every world culture. Through the movements, the body becomes freer. Body and soul find new modes of expression through singing. Sung dances have healing and harmonising effects. They simultaneously bring people in closer connection with themselves, as well as with the group.

Information:

Carien Wijnen is a medical practitioner, holistic therapist, and singing therapist. Since 1986, she has lead seminars in Germany and abroad on the healing powers of singing and toning. She also offers private counselling sessions and a training program in Holistic Song Therapy.

Contact:

Zentrum für Gesang & Therapie, 030 615 21 87, www.healingvoice.de