



“Listening at the Threshold”

***CD by the Threshold Choir, Bay Area, California, 2004**

The Threshold Choirs honor the ancient tradition of singing at the bedsides of people who are struggling whether with living or with dying using the voice to offer compassion and comfort. When invited, and without charge, we visit a few times a week in small groups. Families and caregivers may join us in song or may simply listen.

Our repertoire is chosen to respond to musical taste, spiritual direction and physical capacity, including rounds, chants, lullabies, hymns, spirituals and classical choral music. And, as the CD title implies, a lot of what we do at bedsides is listen: to breath, for relaxation, to each other, to our own hearts.

After singing together at bedside vigils for four years, the Threshold Choirs are happy and proud that you're holding "Listening, at the Threshold" in your hands, our first CD of 34 original songs written by members. These songs are among the most treasured of our repertoire and have been deep medicine for the composers as well as for the singers.

We offer them to you in the hope that, regardless of singing experience, you will feel empowered to make these songs your own, to sing them to those you love, and to invite them to sing back to you.

Recorded live in the Tunnel at the Headlands, Marin County, and the Chapel, Dominican Hospital, Santa Cruz

Mixed and mastered at the Coop by Ethan Kenning Produced by Kate Munger, copyright 2004

Graphic design by Kathryn Rile
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Notes

1. Listen (Sherrin Loyd)

These words were inspired by Emily Thurston who spoke during a Quaker Meeting for Worship. This is a song full of dissonances that resolve. I believe that is the process of living in peace.

2. If Not Love (Helen Greenspan)

Even though this is Helen's song, she asked me (Kate) to tell the story. This is the first of over 50 precious songs written by Choir members since 2000. One hot afternoon in June, I was preparing for a rehearsal. I had just been

given some "Abundance" Aromatherapy Spritz. Thinking I could always use more "Abundance" I gave myself a huge spritz. Thirty seconds later, Helen walked around the corner with a platter (not a plate, a platter) of fabulous, huge Cherries. And this precious song.

3. The River (Katharine Osburn)

At the close of a summer's day I was sitting by the Tuolumne River surrounded by tall pines and remembering some wise words of my teacher, Angeles Arrien. "Your power songs are the songs that come through you." As I watched the water move around the rocks I realized that we are all a part of that flow, and we all return to the place we were created. This song came to remind me of abiding calm and connection and purpose.

4. What We Need Is Here (Kate Munger/Wendell Berry)

It is an honor and a great joy to set the musical poetry of Wendell Berry to a tune. It seems to me that unless we are poets, the way to really use these words is to sing them. I love saying these words. I love singing this song. I love believing them.

5. Night Ocean (Susan Keniston/Rumi)

By the steep sides of a fjord on the coast of Maine, strumming and humming with the crickets beneath a midsummer full moon, I set this Rumi poem to music. Later that year I sang it in "Night Fires," a winter solstice celebration that has toured Vermont every December for over 20 years. Some have commented on the song's Hawaiian sound, and I thank Grandmother Ocean, whose liquid jade touches every shore and remembers all songs, for murmuring this Kaua'i melody into my ear on Mt. Desert Isle. Feel in your body the lift and fall of her strong undulations, and you will imbue the song with its original feel.

6. May You Find Peace (Devra Wolf)

"May You Find Peace" was written on 9/12/2001, the day after tragedy struck in New York City. I wrote it filled with grief and compassion for those who died, after hearing countless heartbreaking stories in a single day. Though the song was originally written with despair, it has evolved into a song of hope and of healing.

7. By Love Alone (Helen Greenspan)

After September 11, 2001, my beloved teacher from Spirit Rock Meditation Center asked me to put these powerful words from the Buddha to music. I hardly felt worthy! But as I drove home that night, this is what came to me.

8. The Turtle Remembers (Becky Reardon)

I had been listening to Abbey Lincoln's beautiful album "A Turtle's Dream", and was captivated by her song "Down Here Below". The trance of that music inspired this round, which is about a turtle returning to her source.

9. Navajo Prayer (©2004 Jody Healy)

I went to see the shaman Martin Prechtel at his book reading for "Long Life, Honey in the Heart." The Navajo Prayer was from that book. I wrote the music driving over Hwy 17 on the way home and kept singing it with passion and gusto. I often call my answering machine to record song ideas because I'm afraid I'll forget them. This one stuck. I sing it when I'm feeling afraid, which unfortunately is more often than I'd like to admit. Kate in her usual wisdom is the one that realized it could be sung as a round in three parts.

10. Namaste (Susan Miller)

'Namaste' came in as I meditated early one morning. I started singing this beautiful word and its wonderfully connecting meaning. As I sang, I breathed into the world the idea of the interdependency of all life.

11. Let Me Lie Down (Rebecca Cone)

While spending a weekend with a friend, we found ourselves in a conversation about what we did and did not want at the end of life. Debbie said she'd like to be like an old dog. "Just let me lie down and make my circle in the grass." I could not forget what she said or the way she said it, and when I got home I began the song. Perhaps you would like to give her credit for the words -- Debbie Tudor.

12. Great Winds (Rebecca Cone)

I've carried this one around with me for years in my "Nugget" file -- stuff that grabs me. It wasn't until I started singing with the Threshold Choir that I realized I could write songs. My Dad lived close to the Chippewa in Minnesota, and when I looked at the words again, I felt the rhythm before I heard the melody, carrying the wind.

13. I'Lana's Blessing (I'lana Cotton/Theresa Haddock Williams)

We wrote "Blessing" as a Christmas gift to our church choir one year. We wanted a new benediction to use at the end of our rehearsals. Here's what Terry says about the words: "All of what I would wish for another's life is contained in those few words..... I have this vision of every singer singing it in a prayer for someone who is listening, and each listener feeling the blessing and hope of the prayer."

We are both delighted that this song is being sung by others now, and hope that it will nourish the soul wherever it is heard!

14. Love Transcends All Time (©1989 Jody Healy)

My friend Ryan Whitney, who I called the husband of my heart, was dying of AIDS in fall of 1989. This was my first experience of helping someone transition. While shopping at Ross I saw the words from what would become the song on a calligraphy plaque, which I bought. The music came to me shortly after.

15. Consecration Prayer (Jamie Millican)

Consecration is about formally dedicating a place or person or process to the divine. As a designer of healthcare spaces, I have a deep desire and prayer for all such spaces to be infused with healing energy to support both those who are ill and those who serve them. Inspired and moved by the Threshold Choir, these songs presented themselves to me as a musical expression of that desire and prayer.

16. St. Francis Prayer (unknown)

Our friend Jan considers this song her favorite expression of sacredness. I learned it from my dear friend Joanne Hammil. We hope the author will step forward and receive our gratitude.

17. Guide Me (Kate Munger)

I wrote this song as I realized I needed guidance when I was elated as much as when I was discouraged. Sherrin's lovely harmony has been such a gift. It is one of my favorites to teach a group that might be uneasy about singing together. It is soooo easy and sooooo fulfilling.

18. Deeply Quiet (Sherrin Loyd and Rachel Findley)

Rachel Findley stood up in a silent Quaker Meeting, shortly before the war in Iraq, and spoke these words. As this song is sung both those singing and those listening are able to settle into a quiet place.

19. We Call This Place Into Peace (Kate Munger/Teresa Epperson)

Three of us were singing in a room at Zen Hospice Project where a resident had died the day before. We all came to the realization that, in addition to soap to wash the sheets, this room needed cleansing with a song. Teresa's words were the answer to that prayer.

20. Standing in a Circle (Nancy Schimmel)

My father was a carpenter, so it's not surprising that I've used building as a metaphor in my songs, first in a wedding song for a friend's daughter, "Building a House for Love," and now in this song about singing rounds in a group of friends. I wrote it for and about the Threshold Choir but I hope other singing groups will use it as well.

21. Breathing In, Breathing Out (Kate Munger/His Holiness the Dalai Lama)

These precious words say it all.

22. May All Beings Live in Harmony (Kate Munger/ Buddhist sutra)

These words are so wonderful to sing.

23. Earth is Woven Through My Body (Kate Munger)

Our blood and the ocean have a similar chemical makeup...I love feeling part of the natural world.

24. The Voice of Love (Susan Abbott)

I was reading along in Ken Wilbur's book "One Taste" and he had a quote from Austian poet/playwright Hugo von Hofmannstahl which caught my imagination:"What is the world? An eternal poem out of which the spirit of Godhead

shines and glows, the wine of wisdom foams and sparkles, the sound of love speaks to us." Being a writerly sort of person, I loved the idea of the world being a poem, and of love, wisdom, and spirit coming together in one verse. So the song is after inspiration and tweaking of von Hofmannstahl - a condensed version that was easier to put to melody and sing.

26. Listen, Listen, Listen/I Hear Your Voice (Kate Munger/Paramahansa Yogananda)

I've always loved Yogananda's song and one day at Mt. Madonna, just before I started the first Threshold Choir, the companion tune came to me.

27. Holy Tears (Kate Munger/Anthony De Mello)

I love the encouragement to grieve in this song. That is given so rarely in our culture. I think one of the gifts of the Threshold Choirs is that of gracefully witnessing and honoring tears.

28. It's All Right (Kate Munger)

This is the one song in our huge Threshold Choir repertoire that I would only sing with permission from a family. When it's the right words for the bedside, it is sacred work to sing this song.

29. Oh Break My Heart (Kate Munger/Rumi)

My motto is, "When in doubt, Sing Rumi."

30. If No Other Misses You (Helen Greenspan/Stephen Wayne Anderson)

Stephen Wayne Anderson was executed at San Quentin Prison in January, 2003. The day he was killed one of his poems appeared in the newspaper. I read these words, which are the last few lines of his poem, and knew the extraordinary ability they had to transform isolation into connection and alienation into meaning. I wanted these words to come out into the world in song as a balm for the feeling of being forsaken. I asked Stephen to help me put music to his words and this is what we created.

31. Forgiveness (Helen Greenspan)

Life is not usually neat and tidy and easily wrapped up at it's close. As I sit with people who are dying I am aware by how much is often left unfinished. This song is a prayer for mercy for all of us, living or dying, for our utter human-ness.

32. Perfection (Rebecca Cone/Jack Kornfield)

Several books reside on the commode, handy when one wants to ponder, and one of them is Buddha's Little Instruction Book, by Jack Kornfeld. Just open to any page, find nourishment. This one was short, direct, perfect for our songs.

33. To Go In the Dark (Sherrin Loyd/Wendell Berry)

I found myself reading and re-reading these words these words by
Wendell Berry. I wanted to hold them close to me.
So I followed Kate's example and set them to music.

Lyrics

1. LISTEN - Sherrin Loyd

Listen, Listen, the entire planet is filled with love.
Listen, Listen, through strife and violence weave threads of love.
Listen, Listen.
Stand in peace, hold out hands, open heart, understand.
The entire planet is filled with love, Listen, Listen.

2. IF NOT LOVE - Helen Greenspan

If not love, what are we here for?
If not love, what are we here for?

3. THE RIVER - Katharine Osburn

The River, the river flows on and on,
The River, the river flows on.
Let yourself flow with it onto the sea,
The sea the Mother of us all.

4. WHAT WE NEED IS HERE - Kate Munger/Wendell Berry

And we pray, not for a new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart
and in eye clear. What we need is here.

5. NIGHT OCEAN - Susan Keniston/Rumi

We are the night ocean filled with glints of light.
We are the space between the fish and the moon
as we sit here together.

6. MAY YOU FIND PEACE - Devra Wolf

May you find peace, may you find an end to fear, an end to hatred.
May you find peace.

7. BY LOVE ALONE - Helen Greenspan/The Buddha

Hatred will never cease by hatred. By love alone,
By love alone, by love alone will it end.

8. THE TURTLE REMEMBERS - Becky Reardon

The Turtle remembers a dream in December, Alone with God.
Alone with songs of the whales, returning, returning.

9. NAVAJO PRAYER - Jody Healy

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced.
Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice

10. NAMASTE - Susan Miller

Namaste, the spirit in me recognizes and honors the spirit in you.

11. LET ME LIE DOWN - Rebecca Cone

Let me like down and make a circle in the grass,
Let me lie down, let me like down.

12. GREAT WINDS - Rebecca Cone

Sometimes I go about pitying myself and all the time, I am being carried,
By great winds across the sky.

13. I LANA S BLESSING - I lana Cotton/Theresa Haddock Williams

I pray that peace will find your door and your song will soar to heaven.
I pray that love will grace your days, now and forever.
I pray that love will grace your days, now and forever.

14. LOVE TRANSCENDS ALL TIME - Jody Healy

Love transcends all time, love transcends all time.
It is the voice inside the heart that never stops singing.
It is the voice inside the heart that never stops singing.

15. CONSECRATION PRAYER - Jamie Millican

Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, let me sow pardon
Please help us consecrate this land,
Please help us consecrate this work,
Please help us consecrate our hands
That we might all become healers.

16. ST. FRANCIS PRAYER - Unknown

May I be an instrument of peace.

17. GUIDE ME - Kate Munger/Sherrin Loyd

Guide me through the darkness, guide me through the light.
Abide with me through seas of doubt and in the sacred starry night.

18. DEEPLY QUIET - Sherrin Loyd/Rachel Findlay

We must learn to settle ourselves and be quiet, deeply quiet.
That we might hear the still small voice found inside every one of us.

19. WE CALL THIS PLACE INTO PEACE - Kate Munger/Teresa Epperson

May the air be washed with sunlight; we call this place into peace.
The light and shadow of life rest here and breathe with the breath of the Earth.

20. STANDING IN A CIRCLE - Nancy Schimmel

Standing in a circle of listening, standing in a circle of light,
Standing in a circle of music, come inside.
We come together to build our song. We come to build our silence.
To build a house of music, come inside, come inside.

21. BREATHING - Kate Munger/His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Breathing in, cherish yourself.
Breathing out, cherish the world.

22. MAY ALL BEINGS LIVE IN HARMONY - Kate Munger/Buddhist Sutra

May all beings live in harmony.
May all beings live in peace.

23. EARTH IS WOVEN THROUGH MY BODY - Kate Munger

Earth is woven through my body.
Oceans flow in me as blood.
Wind and breath, inspired, arise.
I greet the Earth with every step.

24. GUIDE ME - Kate Munger

Guide me through the darkness, guide me through the light.
Abide with me through seas of doubt and in the sacred starry night.

25. THE VOICE OF LOVE - Susan Abbott

The world, that poem out of which your spirit shines.
The words of wisdom echo, the voice of love speaks to us.

26. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN/I HEAR YOUR VOICE - Paramahansa Yogananda/ Kate Munger

Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song.
Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song.
I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.
I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.
I hear your voice in every tree. I hear you sing with every bird.
Ah, you are the wind on the sea. Ah, you are the love inside me.

27. HOLY TEARS - Kate Munger/Anthony DeMello

I cannot wipe away your tears, my dear.
I can only teach you how to make them holy.

28. IT S ALL RIGHT - Kate Munger

It s all right, you can go.
Your memories are safe with us.

29. OH BREAK MY HEART - Kate Munger/Rumi

Oh break my heart, oh, break it again.
So I can learn to love even more, again.

30. IF NO OTHER MISSES YOU - Helen Greenspan/Stephen Wayne Anderson

If no other misses you, I will.
I will sense the emptiness
Where once you breathed.

31. FORGIVENESS - Helen Greenspan

For all I leave imperfectly, I sing forgiveness.
For hurts unhealed, love unrevealed, for all that remains unfinished.
I wrap it in mercy and lift it to God and sing forgiveness, forgiveness.

32. PERFECTION - Rebecca Cone/Jack Kornfield

Do not seek perfection in a changing world.
Instead, perfect your love.

33. TO GO IN THE DARK - Sherrin Loyd/Wendell Berry

To go in the dark with a light, is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark, go without sight.
And know that the dark too blooms and sings.
And is travelled by dark feet and dark wings.

***To purchase a copy of the CD, send a check made to Kate Munger for \$18 to:**

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