

## **NVN PHILOSOPHY AND WORKING PRINCIPLES**

As Natural Voice practitioners we believe that singing is our birthright. For thousands of years all over the world people have sung - to express joy, celebration and grief, to accompany work and devotion, to aid healing - without worrying about having a "good" voice or "getting it right". Song has been a part of life, a way of binding the community together. We aim to recreate the sense that vocalising, singing and singing together are natural and open to all.

Each person's voice is as unique as their fingerprint and, respecting that individuality, we aim to provide people with opportunities to express themselves vocally and to develop their full vocal potential. The voice we are born with is capable of freely expressing a full range of emotions, thoughts and experience - this is what we mean by the "natural voice". However, the tensions and stresses of daily life create physical and emotional blocks to the natural voice. We therefore focus on breath and bodywork as the foundations of healthy voice use.

We are principally concerned with the melodic voice - the voice as it moves from speech to melody - the voice that is instinctively used in folk traditions around the world. In this culture many people see themselves as non-singers because of previous experiences of criticism and judgment. Many are excluded from singing groups if they do not have music reading skills. Therefore, in our work we aim to counteract these experiences and to give people confidence in their melodic voice by providing a supportive learning environment.

We believe that vocalising, creativity and song should be accessible to all regardless of previous musical ability or experience. Therefore, creating a sense of an accepting community is an essential element of our approach in working with groups.

These underlying principles inform our work practice in the following ways:

- (a) We provide a range of opportunities for people to explore their voices and enjoy song, including running voice and song workshops, offering training, short courses and creative projects and by running community choirs. Within each context we work according to our guiding principles.
- (b) We work at a pace and using an approach which recognises the needs of the less experienced and slower learners.
- (c) We use demystifying and accessible language and strive to avoid technical language and jargon.
- (d) The majority of music in the world comes from the oral tradition and we

aim to teach songs as far as possible by ear, recognising that this is the most accessible and effective way for most people to learn and retain songs in the longer term.

- (e) Vocal and physical warm ups are an essential element of our work. They ensure healthy vocal use by anchoring the voice in the body and breath and generally prepare the voice for action. They also allow opportunities for increasing creativity, practising listening to others and creating a sense of community.
- (f) We are concerned with the enjoyment of singing and accessibility and so in our work the main focus is on the process of coming together to sing, whilst at the same time developing people's vocal skills and, within the context of performance, aiming for the highest standards.
- (g) Respect for individuals, traditions and creativity is essential to our work - therefore we take care wherever possible to acknowledge sources and song writers and set songs in the context of their history and culture.