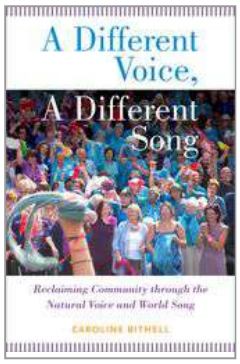

A Different Voice, A Different Song: Reclaiming Community through the Natural Voice and World Song
Caroline Bithell

Print publication date: 2014
Print ISBN-13: 9780199354542
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: October 2014
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199354542.001.0001

The Natural Voice, Community Choirs, and World Song

Setting the Scene

Caroline Bithell

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199354542.003.0002

Abstract and Keywords

Chapter 1 offers an extended overview of the book's immediate subject matter and the theoretical perspectives driving the analysis. Viewed through the window of a thick description of a Sing for Water event at London's Thames Festival, it identifies the communities and practices that are that the main focus of the study. It then maps out the broader fields within which the histories and practices described are positioned and familiarises the reader with a set of key concepts and themes that inform the author's interpretations throughout the book: these include networks, postmodernism, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, cultural appropriation, social capital, participation, and celebration. Reference is made here to pertinent theoretical work in ethnomusicology, social anthropology, political science, and cultural and social theory. The chapter also includes a review of relevant literature on voice work, choirs, community music and world musics in education.

Keywords: Sing for Water, choir, voice work, world music in education, community music, cultural appropriation, transnationalism, participation, celebration

Singing for Water

It is a Sunday afternoon in early September 2011, and I am on the banks of the River Thames, not far from London's Tower Bridge. The annual Mayor's Thames Festival is in full swing, offering a tempting programme of free outdoor performances and other activities at different sites along the South Bank. Parts

of the riverside walkway and some of the open grassy areas that stretch between Tower Bridge and Hungerford Bridge are lined with market stalls offering a colourful variety of global cuisines, clothes, jewellery, artwork, and other handicrafts. The next event to take place at The Scoop—an open-air, amphitheatre-style performance space in front of City Hall—is a performance by the Sing for Water choir. As the crowd builds, the air becomes vibrant with anticipation, curiosity, and goodwill. Soon every place is taken, not only on the wide paved steps around the sunken stage that form the official seating area, but also at the metal balustrade, from which more spectators have an aerial view of the proceedings from the plaza above.

Sixty miles away, England's south coast is being pounded by storms. The skies over London have been ominously overcast, and there have been intermittent showers throughout the morning; but now, as the mass choir of 850 singers takes to the stage, the clouds part and the sun beats down (Figure 1.1). The singers, arranged ten or so deep in a huge horseshoe formation, present a wash of variegated colour forming blocks of sky blue (sopranos), purple (altos), turquoise (tenors), and indigo (basses). Some sport scarves, hats, or flowers. The majority appear, in terms of the problematic classifications of the **(p.11)** 2011 United Kingdom Census, to be "White British". The songs they sing, on the other hand, are drawn from an eclectic palette and hold clues to a web of intriguing connections.

Figure 1.1 Sing for Water at the Scoop. Thames Festival, London, September 2011.

Source: Photo courtesy of Chloe Grant.

All the songs are in arrangements for at least four voice-parts and are sung *a cappella*. Because the singers perform them from memory, they are free to move with the music while they sing and reach out directly to the crowd. Basic dance steps, swaying, clapping, or arm movements accompany some of the songs. The event's creative directors, Roxane Smith and Michael Harper, conduct most of the pieces (Figure 1.2). Not surprisingly, the theme of water is prominent. The choir launches into a rendition of Janice Marie's "Let Love Rain Down", in an arrangement by Dee Jarlett, co-director of Bristol's Gasworks Choir. The anthemic refrain, with its evocation of liberty and justice for all and allusion to the reggae-like mantra of "one love", points to principles embraced by many of the singers gathered here today. "Water

Wrinkles” by Morag Carmichael, who is here in the choir, then zooms in to focus on our immediate surroundings, its simple lyric painting a picture of the Thames as it flows under nearby Hammersmith Bridge. It is followed by a rousing rendition, under the direction of guest conductor Stephen Taberner, of “Dato’s Mravalzhamier”, a variant of the ubiquitous Georgian toasting song whose one-word text *mravalzhamier* may be translated as “may you live a long life” or, more literally, “many years” (roughly equivalent to wishing **(p.12)** someone “many happy returns” on their birthday). The time is now ripe for more active audience participation, and everyone in the crowd becomes part of the show as Stephen teaches a short three-part song, “Seven Steps”, to the choir and audience together. The choir then takes us to Nigeria with “Ide Were”, a Yoruba song to Ochun, the goddess of love and the river, whose rich harmonic fabric is interwoven with delicate solo lines improvised by Una May Olomolaiye. The next song, “My Mouth”, is a composition by Sing for Water’s founder, Helen Chadwick; using text by the Turkish poet Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca, it is drawn from a larger work, *The Singing Circle*, commissioned by the Royal Opera House. This time, the solo lines are taken by Michael Harper, whose gospel-infused counter-tenor soars above the hymn-like, block harmonies of the choir. Then we return to Africa with the upbeat Zulu song “Ziyamazumekisi” conducted by Una May Olomolaiye, who also sings the solo calls. The set ends triumphantly with the Motown favourite “Dancing in the Street”, in an arrangement by Nick Petts (co-director of another Bristol choir, People of Note), with soloist Una May at her most exuberant. With its invitation to people from “across the nation” to come together and dance in the streets, the song is a fitting encapsulation of the spirit of the festival. In a final flourish, the singers produce brightly hued scarves that they wave in the air, forming a multicoloured rainbow, evocative of Desmond Tutu’s vision of a **(p.13)** post-apartheid Rainbow Nation. With the final reprise of “Ziyamazumekisi”, Una May once again directs the audience to join in the singing and move to the beat[1](see web figures 01.01–01.09 and video tracks 01.01–01.02).

The event we have just witnessed is one of the more public manifestations of a grass-roots movement focused around community singing that has been quietly gathering pace since the 1980s, and that now represents one of the most intriguing and potentially momentous developments in the world of amateur, voluntary, participatory arts in the United Kingdom. The Sing for Water initiative itself is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

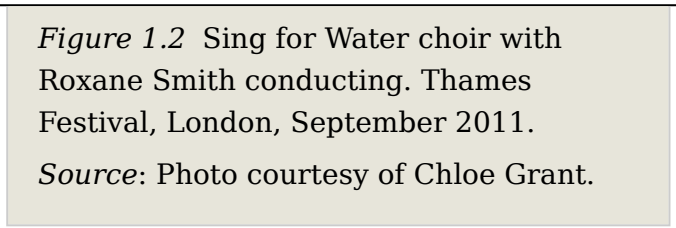

Figure 1.2 Sing for Water choir with Roxane Smith conducting. Thames Festival, London, September 2011.

Source: Photo courtesy of Chloe Grant.

The brainchild of singer and composer Helen Chadwick, the first Sing for Water concert took place in 2002. The annual London event has since been supplemented by a growing web of local fundraising initiatives, including regional mass sings such as Sing for Water West in Bristol, Sing for Water North in Manchester, and Sing and Swim for Water in Cambridge. Before today's event, the initiative had already raised a total of well over half a million pounds for the charity WaterAid, which brings clean water, sanitation, and hygiene education to communities throughout Africa and Asia—a sum far surpassing Helen's original dream of raising £1,000.[2]

For the curious bystander, today's performance raises a number of questions. Where have these 850 singers come from? How is it possible that—as Roxane mentioned when she introduced the singers—this is the first time these particular individuals have all performed together as a choir? How did they learn these songs in a range of foreign languages that they sing without words or scores? They all look so joyful, so colourful, so energised, so much in their element. Is this something that I, too, can be a part of?

The first question is answered at the end of the performance when Simon Hughes, local Member of Parliament and Chair of the Thames Festival Trust, takes the microphone to run through a list of fifty choirs from across Britain and beyond which are represented here today by at least some of their members. Several identify themselves with reference to their locality; these include Bangor Community Choir, Norwich Community Choir, Crystal Palace Community Choir, Colliers Wood Chorus, Streatham Voices, and the Cardiff Canton Singers, alongside the more suggestive Red Leicester Choir and the quirky-sounding Whitstable Whistlefish. Many others choirs have adopted names that seem to be indicative of their purpose, both musical and social: Get Vocal, Sounds Allowed, Good Vibrations, The Big Heart and Soul Choir, Open Arms, Raised Voices, and Raise the Roof. Still others, such as the Quangle Wangle Choir and Where's the Cake, opt for the whimsical or obtuse. The singers have all been busy over the summer learning the repertoire, some in weekly choir meetings, some in specially arranged day workshops, and others on their own using teaching CDs and scores prepared by Roxane and Michael. Many of them took part in a mass rehearsal yesterday afternoon; others arrived only for the sound check and a somewhat piecemeal run-through **(p.14)** early this morning. Most have been sponsored by friends and colleagues, using either the traditional sponsorship forms provided by WaterAid or the online fundraising site Just Giving. Cash donations will also be collected after the performance by WaterAid volunteers dressed as taps and toilets, who will circulate among the crowd carrying buckets. This year alone, the event will raise £33,000.

Some of the singers have been staunch members of their local community choir for fifteen years or more. Others are new recruits, who may have cut their singing teeth in a beginner's group billed as "Singing for the Terrified"; for them, too, Sing for Water may come to represent an annual reunion with singing friends from far and wide, as well as a fundraising venture. Many will have stories about how joining a choir has "changed their life". The majority of the choirs and singing groups to which they belong are directed by members of the Natural Voice Practitioners' Network (NVPN), of which the three UK-based conductors of today's performance—Roxane, Michael, and Una May—are also members. These three are already well known to many of the singers, who have encountered them at other key events in their singing calendar, such as the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp, or at a day workshop in their home area.

If the majority of faces in the choir fall on the Caucasian end of the racial and ethnic spectrum, this is balanced out with this trio of conductors. Michael Harper, a classically trained counter-tenor whose professional credits range from operatic roles to solo recitals, grew up immersed in the spiritual and gospel singing traditions of the African American community in his hometown in Virginia. In parallel with his performance career, he now undertakes projects with community groups and works as a consultant and voice trainer for Youth Music and Sing Up, as well as teaching classical singing. Having been taken into the heart of the natural voice community, he also appears as a guest teacher at the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp. Vocalist and composer Una May Olomolaiye, born in Leeds to Jamaican parents, likewise grew up in the gospel tradition. She performs with the professional *a cappella* group Black Voices and has become a recognised solo voice in the British jazz scene. Her activities in the natural voice world include directing Coventry's WorldSong choir and the Leicester Amika Choir. She has also collected music on her travels in Africa, some of which she has subsequently arranged for choirs. She brings to her work with British choirs a strong improvisatory and rhythmic sensibility, as well as seemingly boundless energy and a natural capacity to tap into people's hidden potential that have made her such a popular teacher. These qualities are shared by Roxane Smith, who, from her home base in rural Wales, leads community choirs in Machynlleth, Aberystwyth, and Dolgellau and runs singing sessions at drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, as well as workshops for schools, colleges, and youth groups. She, too, is a regular teacher at the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp, and has also **(p.15)** worked on mass community choir projects under the auspices of the Centre for Performance Research.[3] Joining the team as guest conductor this year is Stephen Taberner. A leading player in the *a cappella* movement in Australia, Stephen is best known in the United Kingdom as the director of the Australian all-male vocal ensemble the Spooky Men's Chorale, which has just completed its 2011 UK tour. Since the Spooky Men grew out of its members' shared passion for Georgian songs, it is fitting that Stephen should have conducted "Mravalzhamier". He, too, is a familiar face to many of today's

singers, who attended a Spooky Men concert or workshop elsewhere in the country only a week or two ago.

The Georgian connection can be traced back to the roots of the Sing for Water story. The event's founder, Helen Chadwick, has been fascinated with music from different parts of the world throughout her career as a singer, actress, and composer—a career which spans her early work with Cardiff Laboratory Theatre, her subsequent work at the National Theatre, her recent production *Dalston Songs* (staged at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre), and her performances with her own vocal *a cappella* ensemble, the Helen Chadwick Group. Helen also founded the London Georgian choir, initially known as Songs of the Caucasus and later renamed Maspindzeli, and the first Sing for Water performance consisted entirely of Georgian songs.

Today's programme performed by the mass choir has been punctuated by guest spots featuring the Manchester-based vocal quartet The Lovenotes, with jazz/blues singer Helen Watson. The natural voice connection extends to members of this ensemble too. Jules Gibb is the current Chair of the Natural Voice Practitioners' Network and another stalwart of the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp. Like fellow Lovenotes Faith Watson and Rose Hodgson, Jules also leads choirs and singing groups in and around Greater Manchester, and earlier in the summer she co-organised the first Sing for Water North performance that took place as part of the Manchester Day Parade.

The question "Is this something that I, too, could be part of?" is answered by Helen Chadwick in her opening statement on the "About Sing for Water" page on WaterAid's website: "Sing for Water is all about people creating events under their own banner and in their own way. Anyone who enjoys singing can take part" (http://www.wateraid.org/uk, acc. July 10, 2013). The original happening in London has spawned a growing network of initiatives that now includes events in France, Germany, and Australia, as well as regional Sing for Water performances across Britain; these mass sings take place in city squares or in water-related settings, such as piers and swimming pools. In this sense, what we have just witnessed is only the tip of the iceberg. Sing for Water offers a powerful example of how, to further exploit the water metaphor, a pebble is cast, the ripples spread, the waves gather force, and a trickle turns into a tide.[4] **(p. 16)**

The Bigger Picture: Definitions and Perspectives

My opening vignette offers the reader a window onto the musical, social, and political world that is the focus of this book. It also points to some of the themes to be explored in greater depth in the chapters that follow. Many of the individuals and initiatives to which the reader has been introduced will also reappear, sometimes in different guises. Crucially, the Sing for Water story brings together three interrelated components that are central to this study: the

natural voice, community choirs, and “world song” (the latter being the shorthand I adopt—by analogy with “world music”—to refer to songs from diverse cultures).

Several references have been made to the concept of the “natural voice”: the natural voice community, the Natural Voice Practitioners’ Network, and the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp. Broader applications and implications of the term are explored in chapter 2. In the context of the natural voice movement in the United Kingdom, the “natural voice”—which is sometimes also characterised as the “instinctive” or “authentic” voice—refers principally to a voice that is not classically trained. The natural voice philosophy, as articulated in the NVPN mission statement, is based on the belief that “singing is everyone’s birthright”—a formulation that resonates with the oft-repeated African saying, “If you can walk, you can dance; if you can talk, you can sing.” The NVPN statement continues: “and we are committed to teaching styles that are accepting and inclusive of all, regardless of musical experience and ability” (http://www.naturalvoice.net/, acc. July 10, 2013). The NVPN was founded by a group of voice practitioners who had undertaken a particular style of voicework training with Frankie Armstrong. Better known to many as an English folksinger, Frankie continues to act as the mentor of the movement. The story of her singing journey and the evolution of her philosophy and practice is one of the threads running through the chapters that follow.

Most of the singers involved in Sing for Water belong to amateur singing collectives that refer to themselves as “community choirs”. There are, of course, thousands of amateur choirs across Britain—including choral societies, Welsh male voice choirs, socialist choirs, Gilbert and Sullivan societies, and other types, such as those featured in the 2008 television series *Last Choir Standing*, for instance, and many of these would also see themselves as community choirs. The question of what makes natural-voice-style choirs different from other choirs, and how deep these differences might run, is another prominent thread in my narrative. Natural voice choirs may be defined initially as open-access choirs, in keeping with their fundamental commitment to inclusivity. In contrast to most choral societies or amateur “four-part choirs in the classical tradition” (such as those described in Ruth Finnegan’s *The Hidden Musicians*), natural voice choirs do not hold auditions or require the ability to sight-read. Songs are taught by ear and sung *a cappella* **(p.17)** and there is far less emphasis on public performance; in fact, some choirs on the NVPN website are listed as “non-performing”. The image natural voice choirs present when they do perform is also quite different from that of the type of amateur choir which models itself on professional choirs. Typically, as in the spectacle presented by Sing for Water, the singers are colourfully and informally clad. Rather than standing stiffly in orderly rows, looking down at their music folders, they may be clapping or moving to the beat. There may be a moment in the performance

when audience members are invited to join in the singing, which reinforces the message that they, too, might find their niche in such a choir.

The material a natural voice choir performs is also very different from that of a typical choral society, as art music is noticeably absent. As in the Sing for Water set described above, arrangements of Anglo-American popular songs figure prominently in the repertoire of many choirs, together with new material composed specifically for choirs of this kind. Perhaps the most striking feature, though, is the extensive place given to songs from different parts of the globe. Tullia Magrini has commented on the way in which “musics coming from the most different places…find unexpected new listeners, fans, and sometimes performers in the most unlikely places” (2000: 328). Salsa classes and samba bands are now widely available and highly visible leisure activities, easily accessed by the residents of any sizeable British town. More surprising, perhaps, is the number of amateur singers with a working repertory of songs from the oral traditions of places as diverse as the Caucasus, the Balkans, Corsica, Saamiland, Orkney, Cameroon, South Africa, Hawai‘i, and the Cook Islands. While in many cases these songs from elsewhere represent one element in an even more eclectic programme, some choirs devote themselves exclusively to this repertoire and may refer to themselves specifically as “world music choirs”.

Singing songs from other parts of the world is, of course, nothing new. Some readers may have memories of their days as Girl Guides or Boy Scouts, singing African, Maori, or Native American (“Red Indian”) songs around a campfire—songs that served as common currency throughout the movement. International camps also offered opportunities for participants from different countries to share their songs: archival documents accessible via the Pine Tree Web make reference both to campfire songs and to folk songs sung by Boy Scouts of different nations at the World Scout Jamboree.[5] Pete Seeger and the Weavers, Joan Baez, and other singers associated with the North American folk revival popularised such songs as “Tzena, Tzena, Tzena” (a song in Hebrew written by Issachar Miron and Jehiel Hagges), “Wimoweh” (based on the South African song “Mbube”, first recorded by Solomon Linda’s Evening Birds in 1939), the Cuban “Guantanamera” (of disputed authorship), and “Gracias a la Vida” (by Chilean singer-songwriter Violeta Parra). Such songs often assumed anthemic status, and were sung by sympathisers **(p.18)** the world over as a statement of solidarity with those striving for peace and democracy. Songs from South Africa in particular have long been popular with Britain’s political choirs, and songs from the African American spiritual and gospel traditions have established themselves in the repertory of many Welsh male voice choirs, together with perennial favourites like the Russian song “Kalinka”.

What we have witnessed in recent years, however, is a dramatic broadening of the constituency for a vast selection of lesser-known songs in more complex arrangements, aided by greater accessibility and ease of dissemination of these

songs via new media. Drawn from the more authentic musical realities of contemporary cultures, these songs are of a different order from the token African, Japanese, or Spanish songs found in school songbooks, and from the arranged folk songs with piano accompaniment brought together in national songbooks. Even more remarkable is the extent to which these songs have become part of people's day-to-day lives and identities, as opposed to occupying the space apart that is the summer camp or concert stage.

The weekend workshops and voice camps attended by many of the singers involved in the natural voice and community choir network typically share the key features summarised above. In these settings, singers may be exposed to more intensive or exploratory work, often delving deeply into the music of one particular culture under the guidance of a native teacher. Again, allowance is made for singers with differing degrees of musical competence, and teaching and learning by ear is the norm. This fundamental emphasis on oral transmission is of central significance. In bypassing musical literacy, the movement challenges fundamental assumptions, conventions, and power relations that underpin many areas of musical activity (including music education) in Britain and in other parts of what is commonly designated "the West".

The choirs and individuals who inhabit this world typically have a strong outward-facing stance that impels them to explore new realms of experience and to make new connections beyond their immediate community. This in turn allows them to contribute to improving not only their own quality of life but also that of other people in other places. While my central focus is on networks of singing activity in the British Isles, my study also follows some of the singers as they venture out—literally as well as metaphorically—into the wider world, where they establish mutually rewarding musical alliances with singers in other cultures that, in some cases, develop into profound, long-term relationships. At this point, the natural voice world intersects with a growing transnational community of singers from different countries who likewise participate in multicultural music activity by learning and performing songs from places where singing plays a more prominent and "natural" role in community life. Some of these other global travellers will also put in appearances later in this book. **(p. 19)**

Singing in the Spotlight

Interestingly, since I began this research, singing has come to enjoy a higher public profile here in Britain, owing in part to the introduction of government-backed initiatives designed to bring singing back into everyday life. In 2007, the Labour government launched its National Singing Programme. Composer, broadcaster, and music educator Howard Goodall was appointed National Ambassador for Singing, his brief being to direct a four-year programme called Sing Up. With an initial budget of £40 million, Sing Up aimed to make every British primary school a "singing school". Also in 2007, the then Mayor of

London, Ken Livingston, launched the five-year Sing London scheme with the goal of “getting the whole of London singing” in time for the Olympics in 2012. The project’s first large-scale event, a ten-day festival held that same year, offered Londoners the opportunity to be “united in collective song—all kinds of people singing all kinds of music in all kinds of places” (http://www.singlondon.org/about-us/our-history, acc. July 10, 2013). Natural voice practitioners are among those who have found work as part of these programmes.

Increased attention has also been paid to the health benefits of singing; short journalistic reports on this topic now regularly find their way into national and local news media. Most recently, this interest has been fuelled by the initiatives of the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health (founded in 2004 at Canterbury Christ Church University), whose mission is to carry out scientific research into “the potential value of music, and other participative arts activities, in the promotion of well-being and health of individuals and communities” and, more particularly, to provide the research evidence base for establishing “Singing on Prescription” (http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SDHR/Home.aspx, acc. July 10, 2013.) The centre’s activities and outputs include a systematic review of a body of non-clinical research on singing and health; a cross-national survey of choral singers in Australia, England, and Germany; and evaluations of the Silver Song Club Project, run by Sing For Your Life Ltd., which promotes community singing groups for older people.[6] Related initiatives include Singing Hospitals, an international network for the promotion of singing in health-care settings, and Singing for the Brain, a project established by Chreanne Montgomery-Smith under the auspices of the Alzheimer’s Society. The latter gained national attention via *The Alzheimer’s Choir*, a widely acclaimed documentary film featuring members of the Bristol Singing for the Brain group (made up of Alzheimer’s sufferers and their spouses) that was aired in 2009 as part of the BBC2 Wonderland series.

Choirs, meanwhile, have become something of a fetish as far as the British media is concerned. The television channel BBC2 has screened several runs of the reality TV series *The Choir*, featuring classically trained choirmaster Gareth Malone attempting to knock into shape a makeshift choir formed of sometimes reluctant individuals from, for example, an unpromising comprehensive **(p.20)** school or a down-at-heel housing estate, most with little or no singing experience, to meet the deadline for a high-profile performance in a prestigious setting such as London’s Royal Albert Hall or the World Choir Games in China. In the summer of 2008, a primetime Saturday evening slot on BBC1 was allocated to a new series, *Last Choir Standing*, which operated according to the knockout principle, with entrants in the earlier rounds being accepted or rejected by a panel of celebrity judges and the finalists being systematically voted off the programme by viewers. Another programme entitled *The Choir* is an established Sunday-evening feature on BBC Radio 3. Introduced by Welsh

singer Aled Jones (who, as a young boy, was catapulted to fame as the voice of the theme song to *The Snowman*[7]), this programme has showcased many different kinds of choir, from established classical chorales and cathedral choirs to visiting ensembles from the Republic of Georgia.

The racy introduction to the first episode of *Last Choir Standing* impressed upon viewers the useful fact that Britain now had more choirs than fish and chip shops. This flurry of media activity might lead us to believe that the barriers to universal participation have largely been removed. Certainly, at first sight, spectacles such as *Last Choir Standing* seem to represent a significant move towards the democratisation of singing. Anyone can have a go and, at least in the later stages of the selection process, the public help determine the winner. Many in the natural voice and community music world, however, are unsettled by an underlying ethos that remains antithetical to the principle of empowerment these communities hold so sacred. Series such as *The Choir* and *Last Choir Standing* may have served to popularise amateur singing, but for their critics they continue to embody much that is wrong with the way in which singing is conventionally taught and, more crucially, the way in which individual singers may be judged, demoralised, and, ultimately, excluded.

Series such as *The X-Factor* go even further in reinforcing many of the same timeworn values and preconceptions. Entrants aspire to a position of stardom that allows them to occupy centre-stage and bask in the limelight, while also enjoying newfound personal wealth and winning lucrative recording contracts. They can do this, however, only at the expense of the other contestants who must suffer rejection. This format results in deep disappointment, resentment, and the shattering of dreams, many of which were patently unrealistic in the first place, and it all takes place on a very public stage, witnessed by millions. Although some of the hopefuls who fall by the wayside have gained the sympathy of many viewers, who now share their disappointment at losing, others become the butt of ridicule; scenes of their humiliation may even be engineered by the production team because this is part of the recipe for drawing huge numbers of viewers to cut-price reality TV.

Manifestations such as Sing for Water, together with the ever-expanding network of local choirs on which they draw, continue to offer an alternative model outside the competitive framework and to provide a home for singers **(p. 21)** whose goals are primarily interpersonal and experiential rather than individualistic and competitive. These singers are not chasing media-fuelled dreams of fame and fortune. Having found their voices, they are using them to draw attention not to themselves but to issues in the wider world that matter to them. And in their choice of songs, they go some way, at least, towards embracing and giving voice to the multicultural society that Britain has now become.

Research Contexts: Surveying the Literature

The various trends that are brought together in my triad of the natural voice, community choirs, and world song have not yet been comprehensively documented or theorised, in part because they have thus far operated largely beneath the radar. Here I present a brief overview of relevant literature, identifying some of the landmark texts that continue to serve as points of reference, alongside more recent publications that stake out the contemporary state of the field and identify its current concerns and debates. The reader is directed to the bibliographies of these latter works for more extensive references to the most recent research. I engage with further bodies of literature in the following section of this chapter, where I dig deeper into the semiotic fields of more discrete themes and concepts.

Voice and Voicework

A work that is perhaps the closest to this book in terms of its immediate subject matter is Frankie Armstrong and Jenny Pearson's edited volume *Well-Tuned Women: Growing Strong Through Voicework* (2000). Presenting itself as "an essential guide for all those interested in liberating themselves through song, speech and sound" (back cover), the book is a collection of accounts by female voice practitioners of their personal vocal journeys. Among them are a number of current NVPN members, alongside others to be encountered in these pages, including Kristin Linklater, Michele George, and Ysaye Barnwell. In the course of telling their stories, some contributors examine the suppression of the female voice and the effects of social conditioning on women's vocal expression; others consider political and therapeutic uses of the voice and the use of the voice in self-defence. Frankie Armstrong's autobiography, *As Far as the Eye Can Sing*, offers a more detailed account of her own vocal journey and has helped underpin my telling of her story in chapter 3.

Explicit reference to the natural voice is found in the title of Kristin Linklater's handbook, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976, revised edition 2006), of which we shall hear more in chapter 2. Here, Linklater advances her philosophy of the human voice in the context of performance and offers her recipe **(p.22)** for freeing the voice from the physical and psychological blocks by which it is often inhibited. Built around a progression of practical exercises, the book offers a programme to be followed over a period of several months. Aimed primarily at actors, the book also can be found on the shelves of some NVPN members. There are other brands of voice work or vocal coaching that on the surface would seem to share a common language with the natural voice movement but which, on closer inspection, turn out to be aimed at a different clientele, with rather different aspirations. Some are designed primarily for professional singers or aspiring pop stars; others belong in the tradition of the human growth movement or have healing or therapy as their prime goal; and some position themselves in relation to the corporate world. Tellingly, *Set Your Voice Free* by Roger Love carries an endorsement on its front cover from John Gray, author of

Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus. Written, we are told, by "America's foremost vocal coach" who lists among his clients the Beach Boys, the Jacksons, Chicago, Phish, and Hanson, the book also sets out to appeal to those who yearn to "turn [their] dreams of singing into reality" or "dazzle potential clients with dynamic presentations". Love tells readers: "I'd like to show you how to find your true voice, the voice that is as rich and full and beautiful and exciting as you are" (1999: 4). One of the most notable features of books like this is that the social or community dimension is virtually absent, their focus being squarely on achieving personal success.

The titles of two further books have recourse to the concept of the "naked" voice. In *The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing*, W. Stephen Smith (professor of voice at the Juilliard School of Music in New York City) explains how his work is designed "to help singers…strip away the encumbrances that keep them from revealing their essential, 'naked voice'", in the process of which they "uncover their truest, most authentic selves" (2007: 3). Chloë Goodchild's *The Naked Voice: A Singer's Journey to the Spirit of Sound* tells the story of another journey of personal discovery through voice. Goodchild calls her brand of voice work the Naked Voice, with the tagline "transforming our lives through the power of sound". Here, "the naked voice" is characterised as "that original voice inside you, prior to your personality voice and social conditioning…the mouthpiece of your soul, the messenger of your true Self" (http://thenakedvoice.com/, acc. July 19, 2013). These diverse approaches are, at least, united in their view that vocal exploration can be a tool for individual transformation and in the conviction that there is, in some sense, something that might be conceived of (albeit problematically) as a "natural", "naked", or "authentic" voice.

Singing and Choirs

The literature on choral music is more substantial and has seen some interesting additions in recent years. Karen Ahlquist's *Chorus and Community* (2006) **(p. 23)** brings together a selection of case studies of choirs, choruses, and vocal ensembles from across time and across the world, investigating them not only as musical entities but also as groups of people coming together for social, political, and religious purposes.[8] The understanding of both "chorus" and "community" here is quite loose, and the highly divergent nature of the genres and styles under consideration is evident on the book's companion CD. The chorus is presented—in rather general terms—as a tool for "communicat[ing] a variety of messages to serve a variety of needs" (Ahlquist 2006: 1). A surprising number of the chapters take the form of historical studies of such subjects as the connections between music and morality in nineteenth-century England, choral singing in German-speaking Europe in the nineteenth century, the Fisk Jubilee Singers' tour to Holland in 1877, choral music among Russian Mennonites in the early 1900s, choral circles in early Soviet workers' clubs in the 1920s, and a history of a chorus associated with the International Ladies' Garment Workers'

Union in Pennsylvania. In several chapters, the focus is less on the choir itself and more on the work of a (male) pioneer: John Curwen in Britain, Hall Johnson in the United States, and Kornelius Neufeld in Russia. Other chapters offer contemporary case studies of union and lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual (LGTB) choruses in the United States and of the reinvention of the Jewish People's Philharmonic Chorus in New York. The ethnomusicological case studies include one by Bernard Lortat-Jacob, who writes about Sardinian lay brotherhoods, and one by Gregory Barz, who focuses on a Lutheran choir in Tanzania. Barz engages perhaps most closely with notions of community as he unpacks the different ways in which the *kwaya* functions as a musical and social community on multiple levels.[9]

Some interesting insights may also be gleaned from accounts written by choir members. In *Imperfect Harmony: Finding Happiness Singing with Others* (2013), Stacy Horn reflects on almost thirty years of singing with the Choral Society of Grace Church in New York and the central role this played in her life. The choir she writes about may be different to those I am concerned with here—its members undergo auditions, read music, and perform the great choral classics—but she is nonetheless concerned with similar questions. What compels us to sing? Why does communal singing comfort and uplift us when the rest of our life may be marred by disappointment, pain, and loss? Singing in the choir week after week, Horn writes, is "like exercising joy" (15). She also delves into the history of choral singing in the United States and into the recent literature on what the back cover blurb refers to as "the new science of singing", with reference to singing and the brain.

Amanda Lohrey, in her extended essay "The Clear Voice Suddenly Singing" (1998), writes of her time with a small community singing group in the Tasmanian city of Hobart. Singing again emerges as a route to ecstasy, prompting her to more deeply probe the question: What is the secret of the human voice? Lohrey's story offers a useful window onto the *a cappella* renaissance **(p.24)** that has been building in Australia since the late 1980s; in this respect, it offers a closer parallel to the natural voice world. In both Lohrey's and Horn's accounts, themes of personal transcendence and of the choir as community stand out as central concerns.

Additional studies of individual choirs are scattered somewhat unpredictably across a range of journals and other edited volumes. These reflect a number of different lines of enquiry with a variety of countries represented. One prominent line of enquiry is the investigation of the therapeutic effects of singing in the context of health challenges or trauma on, for example, adults with cancer (Young 2009), people with eating disorders (Pavlakou 2009), dementia sufferers (Davidson and Fedele 2011), and in response to adverse life events (Von Lob et al. 2010). Other studies focus on the benefits of choir singing for marginalised, isolated, or hard-to-reach groups, such as prison inmates (Cohen 2009; Roma

2010; Silber 2005), homeless men (Bailey and Davidson 2002, 2005), and the elderly (Bungay et al. 2010; Li and Southcott 2012). Discussion of the social aspects of singing tends to be prominent in such works, together with an exploration of personal rewards, such as increased self-esteem, sense of purpose, and general well being.[10] A smaller number of studies have taken a comparative, cross-national, or cross-cultural approach (e.g. Clift et al. 2008a; Clift and Hancox 2010; Louhivuori et al. 2005). Still others have investigated the social and psychological benefits of choir membership with reference to diasporic or immigrant communities (Li and Southcott 2012; Southcott and Joseph 2013; Wood 2010).[11]

The collection *Where Music Helps: Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection* (Stige et al. 2010a) features a handful of chapters on choirs and singing groups: a group in East London for adults with mental health problems, a choir for adults with physical disabilities in Israel, a children's choir in South Africa, and a senior choir in rural Western Norway. The latter book (which is written from the perspective of music therapy) also includes valuable reflections on how music may be said to create community and on the place of performance in the context of groups set up primarily for social or therapeutic reasons: these are among the key questions I pursue in chapter 7.[12] Studies such as these provide a counterbalance to studies that have focused on more conventional choral traditions whose raison d'être is primarily musical. The majority of the choirs included in the cross-national survey conducted by Clift et al., for example, are choral societies that perform "major choral works from the Western Classical repertoire from the 15th to 20th Centuries" (2008a: 3). We are told that "many participants in the study have had long experience of involvement in choral singing, and many have had singing lessons and can play an instrument. In addition, very few of the respondents were told as children that they could not sing" (10). In their conclusions, the authors note: "This is not to say that adults with little or no previous experience of singing might not find it enjoyable and beneficial if they were to have **(p.25)** the opportunity and encouragement to participate in their local communities" (11). In the present study, I reveal that such a world has, in fact, long existed, and that such participation (as manifested by Sing for Water) already reaches far beyond local communities.

Community Music and Community Music Therapy

The scholarly literature on community music making in Britain has, until recently, been relatively sparse. Ruth Finnegan's *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town* (1989) stands out as a landmark in the field. Finnegan documents the diversity of amateur musical activity in the English town of Milton Keynes in the early 1980s. The book's title alludes to the unseen, taken-for-granted, behind-the-scenes work that sustains the wealth of musical activity that the research revealed. Although it focuses on a narrow geographical area, Finnegan's study ranges widely among classical orchestras and choirs,

amateur operatic societies, brass bands, folk groups, jazz ensembles, rock bands, pop groups, country and western outfits, ceilidh bands, and church music. The groundbreaking nature of her study lay in its insistence on the value and integrity of grass-roots musical traditions. Crucially, Finnegan argued: "Once one starts thinking not about 'the best' but about what people actually *do*...then it becomes evident that there are in fact several musics, not just one, and that no one of them is self-evidently superior to the others. In Milton Keynes...there are several *different* musical worlds, often little understood by each other yet each having its own contrasting conventions about the proper modes of learning, transmission, composition or performance" (1989: 6). This is precisely the perspective I adopt in my own study.

Anthony Everitt's *Joining In: An Investigation into Participatory Music in the UK* (1997), a report commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation and described as the "first-ever account of participation in music in the United Kingdom", represented another landmark. Here, Everitt sets out the principles and politics of participatory music making and offers an insight into the range of instrumental playing and singing that is found in the community, as opposed to on the concert stage. Stephanie Pitts offers variations on the theme in *Valuing Musical Participation* (2005), in which she explores the motivations, values, and experiences of participants in a variety of musical settings—a school, a university, a residential summer school, and two music festivals—with the aim of elaborating a broader theoretical perspective on the way in which music contributes to social and personal fulfilment.

Barbershop singing is an interesting example of a bounded musical community that has attracted attention from sociologists as well as musicologists and ethnomusicologists. Sociologist Robert A. Stebbins, in *The Barbershop* ***(p.26)*** *Singer: Inside the Social World of a Musical Hobby* (1996), also focuses on the dynamics of participation, exploring the distinctive lifestyles enjoyed by "barbershoppers" and the rewards they derive from "the barbershop experience". Stebbins considers barbershop singing as an example of a serious leisure pursuit, and describes a world in which local clubs intersect with umbrella groups in the form of national societies, associations, or federations (a model that might also be applied to the natural voice world). In *The British Barbershopper: A Study in Socio-Musical Values* (2005), Liz Garnett (writing as a musicologist and a participant-observer) examines barbershop singing as "a distinctive and under-documented facet of Britain's musical landscape" (1), a "hidden" music, overshadowed by the greater scholarly attention paid to barbershop singing in the United states and Canada. With a particular interest (which I share) in theorising "the ways in which musical style and cultural discourses interact in the formation of identity" (2), Garnett builds on Judith Butler's notion of identity as performative and Anthony Giddens's thesis that each individual is engaged in an ongoing narrative that establishes and maintains a sense of self. She also seeks to unpack what she terms "the

processes both of the social mediation of musical meanings and the musical mediation of social meanings" (2). Gage Averill—writing this time about barbershop singing in the United States in *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (2003)—shares a perception of sound structure as social structure. Alongside sociability, participation, and a concern for leisure, Averill identifies service to the community as another value associated with barbershop singing; he also refers to the themes of innocence, alienation, and redemption that lie at the core of the barbershop revival. All of these concepts will find some resonance in our journeys across the natural voice landscape. Especially rewarding is Averill's chapter "Romancing the Tone: Song, Sound, and Significance in Barbershop Harmony", in which he attends in some detail to the emphasis on expanded sound and the thrill the singers derive from the phenomenon of "ringing" chords. Among the aficionados of Balkan and Georgian music to be encountered in later chapters, we will likewise find the notion that particular harmonic configurations lead to euphoric peak experiences.

In the context of community music as both discipline and profession, Lee Higgins' *Community Music: In Theory and Practice* (2012) traces the development of community music in the United Kingdom from the 1960s, when it first began to emerge as a sub-strand of the community arts and community cultural development movement. Describing community music workers as "dreamers" and "boundary-walkers" who derive a "position of strength" from inhabiting the margins and "continu[ing] to challenge through innovation and resistance" (6), Higgins goes on to elaborate a theoretical framework that includes concepts of hospitality, friendship, facilitation, participation, cultural democracy, and diversity. The book also includes reviews of practice, **(p.27)** including several case studies of community music projects. Noting the way in which community music has traditionally concerned itself with musical activity outside educational settings and formal, statutory institutions, Higgins characterises its practitioners as "skilled music leaders, who facilitate group music-making experiences in environments that do not have set curricula" (2012: 4). Many skilled leaders of this kind who are active in the natural voice world are encountered in chapter 3.

A newfound international perspective is reflected in *Community Music Today* (Veblen et al. 2013). Hailed by one reviewer as "by far the most comprehensive analysis of community music from around the world in its breadth, depth, and gloriously dynamic diversity" (back cover), the collection presents perspectives from an international cohort of contributors who pay equal attention to theory and practice. Community music is understood comparatively loosely as embracing "formal, informal, nonformal, incidental, and accidental happenings" (back cover). The book includes overviews of community music in North America, the United Kingdom, the Nordic countries, Africa, East Asia, and Australia and New Zealand. It also offers case studies of community music

activity in a variety of settings; among them we again find a few concerned with community choirs or choruses (in this case, in the United States and Canada). The material assembled in the *International Journal of Community Music* (under the editorship of Lee Higgins and published since 2008 by Intellect, having had an online presence since 2004) is likewise international in its reach and eclectic in the kind of work represented. In the United Kingdom, meanwhile, shorter articles, reports, and news items are brought together in *Sounding Board*, the quarterly magazine of the organisation Sound Sense.

In his foreword to *Community Music Today* as well as in his own monograph, Higgins links the new injection of energy and interest that community music has enjoyed since 2000 with advances in cognate fields—in this case the increased visibility of applied ethnomusicology, community music therapy, and cultural diversity in music education—which have changed the landscape of musical discourse. The community music therapy movement has, as its name suggests, sought to reinvigorate discussions of music in relation to community from the perspective of music therapy and at the same time to put "culture" more firmly on the music therapy map. In so doing, it has moved closer to the Scandinavian tradition of music therapy, in which culture and community have long been within the frame. A key text here (pre-dating *Where Music Helps*, discussed above, but featuring some of the same authors) is the foundational volume *Community Music Therapy* (Pavlicevic and Ansdell 2004). This book's fourteen contributors—who include music therapists working in Norway, Germany, Israel, South Africa, and the United States alongside several UK-based practitioners—set out to rethink both "music" and "community" and to offer readers "a new way of considering music therapy in more **(p.28)** culturally, socially and politically sensitive ways" (back cover).[13] Of particular interest here is the shift away from a conception of music therapy as a method that employs music as treatment for a specific problem or condition to a broader conception of an intervention that harnesses music as part of a health and wellbeing approach. In this respect, community music therapy shares common ground with contemporary understandings of community music.

Ethnomusicology and World Musics in Education

Where it is defined in terms of professional practice, community music is still conceptualised as an act of intervention, whereby a trained practitioner facilitates music making among a group of participants, usually in the context of a funded project. Across the globe, an immeasurable amount of communal music making takes place without any such facilitator, and this, too—as in the local worlds described by Finnegan, Pitts, and our trio of barbershop commentators—offers important insights into the workings of communities defined by particular musical practices. The field of ethnomusicology is, of course, awash with full-length studies of this kind of music making. Typically combining ethnographic documentation with interpretation and theoretical critique, accounts of specific musical traditions add to our understanding, not only of what musical

communities exist in the world (what they look and sound like, what they do), but also of how such communities function, at a deeper level, and how music itself does its work in social, psychological, and cultural terms.

Book-length studies of contemporary vocal traditions with a particular focus on multipart singing include Veit Erlmann's *The Early Social History of Zulu Migrant Workers' Choirs in South Africa* (1990) and *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa* (1996a), Jane Sugarman's *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings* (1997), Bernard Lortat-Jacob's *Chants de Passion: Au Coeur d'une Confrérie de Sardaigne* (1998), and my own book, *Transported by Song: Corsican Voices from Oral Tradition to World Stage* (2007). Here it will suffice to highlight just a few additional themes for the reader to keep in mind. Erlmann is especially concerned with the part played by the South African choral genre *isicathamiya* in the lives of its performers and with the meaning of performance as a social act offering a space for embodying alternative identities and imagined orders that may not be possible in day-to-day life; in Erlmann's analysis, meaning does not reside "in the music" but is rather "produced in the ever-shifting interaction between actors, interpreters, and performers" (1996a: 102). The central premise underpinning Lortat-Jacob's discussion of the musical traditions of Sardinian confraternities in *Chants de Passion* is that "acoustic harmony results directly from social harmony and cannot exist without it" (1998: 10). A similar insistence on "the two-way interaction between aesthetic and social **(p.29)** considerations" provides the framework for Sugarman's work on singing in Prespa Albanian communities (1997: 22). In *Transported by Song*, I devote a chapter to exploring the subjective experience (for Corsican singers) of singing in harmony and singing with others, together with notions of collective singing as a kind of "intoxication" that has both transcendental and therapeutic properties.

An established classic among ethnographies with singing at their heart is Anthony Seeger's *Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People* (1987; reissued 2004). Of particular interest to us here is that the Suyá people of Brazil, among whom Seeger lived in the 1980s, routinely sang songs in a variety of Indian languages they did not understand and were "generally uninterested in translations" (2004: 19). All songs, Seeger tells us, "were said to come from *outside* Suyá society" (52, my emphasis), and some were learned directly from "foreigners".[14] Here, the answer to "why?" lies in part in the belief that "by taking and performing other groups' songs, the Suyá incorporated some of those groups' power and knowledge into their own community" (58–59). Here we may note not only that singing other people's songs was in this case perfectly normal but also that what was being transmitted or "taken" was more than simply the songs themselves. The Suyá, meanwhile, share the belief that songs transform humans and make them euphoric.

With regard to the consumption of world music away from its place of origin, there now exists a substantial body of critical literature, with contributions from scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, popular music, and cultural studies. For the most part, however, these works are concerned with the commercial products of the global music industry, and they focus on questions of economics and power relations, often aligning themselves with the discourse of cultural imperialism (discussed later in this chapter). Comparatively little attention has been paid to those who seek to actively participate in music cultures not their own. A notable exception is Mirjana Laušević's *Balkan Fascination: Creating an Alternative Music Culture in America* (2006), a study inspired by the author's realisation that the majority of people who not only danced to but also played and sang Balkan songs and dance tunes in the United States were not (as she had initially assumed) immigrants from Balkan countries like herself but WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). We will return in chapter 6 to Laušević's analysis of the layers of meaning that Balkan songs assumed for their American exponents.

Other volumes have addressed the teaching of world music traditions in educational settings. The contributors to Ted Solís's *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles* (2004) consider world music ensembles (mainly instrumental) in universities (mainly in the United States). Several of the studies in this collection offer valuable perspectives on issues of authenticity, to which we will return in chapter 6. Huib Schippers's *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective* **(p.30)** (2010) also draws its examples largely from instrumental traditions. It links developments in ethnomusicology and the rise of world music with the project of increasing cultural diversity in music education, in another exploration of the dynamics of teaching and learning music "out of context". Schippers insists that we should view this phenomenon in a positive light: "The West now has the opportunity to come full circle in its interaction with other music cultures, from knowing only one culture, to exploration, to domination, to exoticism, to tolerance, to acceptance, to inclusion in a new and diverse reality" (2010: xvii–xviii).

Musical Tourism

Finally, parts of my analysis also articulate with the literature on cultural tourism in ways that will be elucidated in chapter 8. With specific regard to musical tourism, my work complements that of Chris Gibson and John Connell (*Music and Tourism: On the Road Again*, 2005) by turning the spotlight on small-scale, collaborative, ethically aware musical encounters that are quite different from the more passively consumed product manufactured by a profit-driven industry that might characterise musical pilgrimages to Liverpool, Nashville, or New Orleans, for example, and from the mass invasion—often uninvited and affording no meaningful exchange with local people—of a remote island identified as the "perfect" location for a global dance party. In so doing, it also

responds to Martin Stokes's call for "more nuanced ethnographic research…taking into account at least some of the motivations of actors and agents in tourist encounters and exchanges and the specificities of music as a form of social engagement" (1999: 141).

Digging Deeper: Themes, Issues, and Concepts

From my focus on the natural voice, community choir, and world song triad, there emerges a set of broader themes and concerns that demand more in-depth critical appraisal and offer the scope for more nuanced theorisation. Some will be introduced and elaborated in the course of my analysis; others warrant an initial exposition as part of this introductory chapter. Central themes that will recur in different contexts include the transformative power of music, the politics of participation, music as social capital, and music as a tool for intercultural engagement. While my conceptual frameworks rest primarily on my home discipline of ethnomusicology, I also draw on theoretical perspectives from social anthropology, political science, and cultural and social theory (including cultural studies and postcolonial studies). A series of studies on ritual, community, and the multiculturalism–cosmopolitanism **(p.31)** nexus—again emanating from a range of academic disciplines—have also informed my thinking and helped lend explanatory power to my findings.

Networks, Scenes, and Movements

The "network" descriptor as used by the Natural Voice Practitioners' Network seems an apt one for defining a loose-knit community whose members share a basic philosophy and set of working principles. Apart from the website, the tools of this network include a newsletter, an email dialogue list, an annual gathering and other joint events, and use of similar teaching resources (many produced by NVPN members). The singers who attend the choirs, workshops, and other events organised under the NVPN umbrella, and who also come together at national events like Sing for Water, may likewise be seen as part of a network, although at this level there is no body to which one may sign up as a member beyond one's own choir. Events on the periphery—including one-off day or weekend workshops—may also include people who arrive independently with no prior association with the natural voice world. Some may be involved with other musical networks or have professional reasons for attending (a local school teacher, for example). For others, it may simply be a day out, booked on a whim. Their contact with the network will be transitory, but attendees will still have been exposed to a certain way of working with a certain type of repertoire, and they may be inspired to seek out similar events in the future.

Specialised events, such as those devoted to Georgian singing, may draw their clientele from a smaller pool of singers who are not necessarily active in the wider natural voice network (that is, they may not belong to a choir, or be involved in Sing for Water, or attend summer camps), but who are prepared to travel further afield to pursue their particular passion. These singers may form a

more circumscribed network which (as in the Georgian example) has its own email circulation list and other social media connections, together with a common repertoire. Some of the most dedicated may also travel together to the source of the music, thereby accumulating a set of shared experiences and memories as well as friends in the host culture. At this level, concepts denoting transnational groupings become more useful.

The wider world that includes the outer circles of natural-voice-related activity, where the network that defines itself in terms of natural voice overlaps with related networks that have other ways of defining themselves (the community music network, for example), may perhaps best be viewed as “scenes”. As described by Richard Peterson and Andy Bennett in their introduction to *Music Scenes*, the “scene” concept has been adopted as a theoretical model for research into the production, performance, and reception of a type of popular music that “focuses on situations where performers, support **(p.32)** facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment” (2004: 3). A “scene” in this sense, with its informal or do-it-yourself overtones, may be contrasted with the multinational music industry as an operation involving a comparatively small number of people creating off-the-peg music products for mass markets. One modification to this definition must be made if we are to view the natural voice world as a scene. There are no fans in the conventional sense here: the followers are almost exclusively direct participants in, rather than observers or consumers of, the action that occupies centre-stage.

Peterson and Bennett go on to distinguish three different types of scene. A *local scene* “corresponds most closely with the original notion of a scene as clustered around a specific geographic focus”. A *translocal scene* is made up of “widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle”. Finally, a *virtual scene* denotes a “newly emergent formation in which people scattered across great physical spaces create the sense of scene via fanzines and, increasingly, through the Internet” (2007: 6–7). These distinctions and the kind of layering they suggest also form a useful backdrop for my later analysis.

In some writings, as Peterson and Bennett note, “scene” is used more or less interchangeably with “community”. The latter, however, is used in so many other senses that it becomes less useful as a referent for a more specialised manifestation without further qualification. Here, I occasionally speak of “the natural voice community” when referring to the body of people involved in the broader “scene”, reserving “network” mainly for those times when I am referring more specifically to the NVPN. Peterson and Bennett’s formulation of the scene concept draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) definition of the “field” and Howard Becker’s (1982) idea of “art worlds”. While “field” as used by Bourdieu may be productive as an analytical concept, I find it less inviting for my present

purposes, not least because of its overlap with the notion of conducting research “in the field”, as well as its use in common parlance to refer to broader social structures, as in “the field of education”. If I use the formulation “art worlds” or the related “music worlds”, I do so in a broad sense rather than in the more specific terms of Becker’s definition, where “art world” encompasses the range of professions and activities that support the production of works of art as part of an explicit argument about the fallacy of artistic autonomy.

To the extent that the majority of the NVPN membership shows a strong commitment to a shared ethos or ideology and to a set of fundamental principles that inform and define its practice, this network also has elements of a movement. It has a message that it wishes to spread and, in presenting an alternative to more mainstream, institutional offerings and in challenging widespread assumptions and orthodoxies that some of its members may view as misguided, it possesses some features suggestive of a subculture or counterculture. It also has, in Frankie Armstrong, a visionary founder and **(p. 33)** charismatic leader, evocative of the “burning souls” who are often found at the forefront of social movements, including music revivals. Through her pioneering work, Frankie has contributed to developments beyond the United Kingdom as well—in particular, she has been an important influence in the *a cappella* movement in Australia. Like other movements, such as America’s civil rights movement or the international women’s movement, the natural voice endeavour has also moved in from the margins to make its contribution to a process of social change.

Global Flows, Cosmopolitan Cultures, and Transnational Connections

An interesting body of work presents itself for the theorisation of the transnational groupings alluded to above, helping to shed light not only on the ways in which such formations function but also how they may be seen to relate to broader geopolitical trends and to theories of postmodernism, globalisation, and cosmopolitanism. Here I briefly revisit a selection of seminal or representative texts, giving priority to those theories and concepts that will be of most use to us in the analysis that is to follow.

Much has been written about the postmodern condition and the opportunities, as well as the threats and disillusions, that it presents to its subjects. Postmodernism is typically portrayed as the age of diversity, plurality, hybridity, and creolisation, with their attendant complexities, ambiguities, and impurities. For critics such as Fredric Jameson, the postmodern experience is one of fragmentation which reduces cultural expression to acts of pastiche or bricolage (see Jameson 1998). The past is relentlessly mined as a source of symbols and quotations, but it is a past that has lost its logic and linearity. Deracinated from the old historical certainties and the positivist “grand narratives of progress, expansion and enlightenment” (Featherstone 2005: 167) that they produced, the postmodern consciousness may be more democratic, but it is also more

schizophrenic. The absolutes and universals that belonged to the triumph of modernism no longer have validity in a world where essentialising and totalising tendencies are seen as antithetical to a respect for the diversity of ideas as well as cultures. Truths have become partial and open to contestation; every story is allowed its own validity. Difference may now be celebrated, but at the same time, it is commodified: the much-vaunted global village is also a global bazaar that cannot remain independent of the free-market economy. As Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon express it: “The ‘Post-Modern Age’ is the age of diversity, choice and the proliferation of tastes. Virtually anything I can imagine, seek or desire is available in the international capitalist market place” (1995: 149). Clearly, this brings opportunities that may also have negative effects as “things”, both tangible **(p.34)** and intangible, are appropriated and decontextualised, sometimes to the detriment of their maker or place of origin.

Postmodernism also repositions individual subjects as active agents who, rather than inheriting an identity that is fixed and monolithic, construct multiple, fluid identities out of the many possibilities that are now within reach. In this sense, identity is performative. Stuart Hall has spoken of identities as a “process of becoming rather than being”, and as being more about “routes” (where we are going) than “roots” (where we have come from) (1996: 4). While this opens up a world of endless possibility, it may also result in disorientation or a sense of being adrift. A sub-strand of the postmodern story is that of the disenchantment and nostalgia that, virus-like, have infected the contemporary Western world. Since the 1960s, accounts have multiplied of how the perceived loss of roots and soul in an increasingly secular, industrialised, institutionalised, and materialistic world has given birth to revival movements seeking to revitalise local rituals and reclaim cultural heritage, thereby restoring a sense of community. To these are added tales of how many in the West have been inspired to turn anew to other, more “traditional” societies that appear to them still to inhabit a kind of golden age and to possess the keys to a more natural, organic, or holistic brand of health, happiness, and wisdom.

Underpinning the postmodern turn are powerful and seemingly relentless processes of globalisation and these, too, have been exhaustively documented and widely theorised. The more normative formulations of globalisation need not detain us here, except to note that their inadequacies have also been hotly debated. As many critics have reminded us, interconnectedness among peoples and cultures is hardly a new phenomenon: processes of interaction and exchange have always been a part of human life. At the same time, much of what is brought under the “global” banner is not, strictly speaking, global at all, even if in the common parlance the term “globalisation” has been used, as Ulf Hannerz puts it, “to describe just about any process that crosses state boundaries” (1996: 6). Hannerz argues for “transnationalism” as a term that is both more accurate and more productive. This he qualifies by stressing that transnationalism does not come with the assumption that we are talking about

nations or states as corporate actors. Rather, “in the transnational arena, the actors may now be individuals, groups, movements”, as well as business enterprises (ibid.).

The “trans” prefix appears again in the concept of “transculturality”, which is Wolfgang Welsch’s preferred alternative to multiculturality. Multiculturalism may appear progressive, he argues, insofar as it embraces the goals of tolerance and understanding, but “its all too traditional understanding of cultures threatens to engender regressive tendencies which by appealing to a particularistic cultural identity lead to ghettoisation or cultural fundamentalism”. In practice, “lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these” (1999: 197). Transculturality points to “a multi-meshed and **(p.35)** inclusive, not separatist and exclusive, understanding of culture” (200). For similar reasons, David Hollinger has made a case for a perspective he terms “postethnic”. He defines postethnicity as “the critical renewal of cosmopolitanism in the context of today’s greater sensitivity to roots”—a sensitivity that nonetheless avoids viewing the world as no more than a multiplicity of ethnocentrisms. This renewal has found expression in labels such as “rooted cosmopolitanism”, “cosmopolitan patriotism”, and “critical cosmopolitanism” that distinguish themselves from cosmopolitanism of the classical kind with its notion of “citizens of the world” who were “proudly rootless” (2005: 5).

To aid the project of theorising what he refers to as “fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics”, Arjun Appadurai proposes five dimensions of “global cultural flows” that serve as the building blocks of “imagined worlds”: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (1996: 33). Of these, ethnoscapes (dealing with the unprecedented movement of peoples in today’s shifting landscapes), mediascapes (referring to the widespread production and dissemination of information and images), and technoscapes (the high-speed movement of new technologies across once impenetrable boundaries) are of most use to us here. Taking up the theme of the deterritorialisation of culture and highlighting the “profoundly interactive” nature of contemporary ethnoscapes, Appadurai argues that the “ethno” in ethnography has taken on “a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond” (48). “What a new style of ethnography can do,” he goes on to say, “is to capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences” (152). This is precisely one of my central aims in the present study.

As we prepare to examine more directly the small-scale networks and groupings of individuals who are brought together by shared musical enthusiasms, we find a further set of potentially useful concepts in ethnomusicological and anthropological texts. Thomas Turino, in *Music as Social Life*, introduces the notion of “cultural formations”. These may take the form of “smaller nested

cultural formations", but they may also straddle national borders. He goes on to identify three prominent trans-state cultural formations: *immigrant communities, diasporas*, and *cosmopolitan formations* (2008: 117). It is the last of these that are of service to us here. "Like diasporas," Turino writes, "*cosmopolitan cultural formations* involve prominent constellations of habits that are shared among widely dispersed groups in countries around the world; but unlike diasporas, cosmopolitan formations are not traced to any particular homeland" (118).

Mark Slobin has adopted the term "interculture" to refer to "the far-flung, expansive reach of musical forces that cross frontiers" (1993: 61). Of the three types of interculture he visualises—*industrial, diasporic*, and *affinity*—it is affinity interculture that is most relevant to the case in hand. In Slobin's analysis, industrial interculture produces the commodified music system **(p.36)** that is often portrayed, as he puts it, as "a corporate octopus whose tentacles stretch menacingly across the world, dominating local scenes and choking off competition" (ibid.). Affinity interculture has a far more benign face. The groups it produces, which he memorably characterises as "charmed circles of like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding", serve as "nuclei for free-floating units of our social atmosphere, points of orientation for weary travelers looking for a cultural home" (98). The grass-roots, subcultural undertones of this characterisation make it doubly suited to the kinds of musical networks that concern us here.

Tullia Magrini draws on John Blacking's concept of "sound groups", "formed by people who choose a certain music mainly because they identify a part of themselves with the values they connect with that music" (2000: 329). Again, while such groups may coincide with ethnic, generational, or social groups within a given society they may also be transnational, and, crucially, they remain open, acting as voluntary communities of consent (as opposed to prescribed communities of descent). In a similar way, Veit Erlmann adapts Kant's notion of the "aesthetic community…that forms and undoes itself on the basis of taste", applying this to "all those social formations—the loose affiliations, groupings, neo-tribes, and cult groups of free-floating individuals—that are not anchored in rigid structures of control, habitus and filiation" (1998: 12). Elsewhere, he writes of how world music styles "become demarcators of community through the forging of affective links between dispersed places" (1993: 12).

Hannerz, meanwhile, draws attention to an important distinction between cosmopolitans and tourists, building on Paul Theroux's proposal that many people's travel choices are motivated by the notion of "home plus" (Spain, for example, representing—for Northern Europeans—home plus sun). "But the plus," Hannerz goes on, "often has nothing to do with alien systems of meaning, and a lot to do with facts of nature, such as nice beaches," making tourism

largely a spectator sport. Cosmopolitans, by contrast, “tend to want to immerse themselves in other cultures…they want to be participants” (1996: 104–105).

In terms of the foregoing definitions, the more adventurous subjects in my study offer a prime example of cosmopolitan individuals who belong to transnational formations in the shape of affinity groups that themselves engage in transcultural activity. To explain how and why these particular groups and networks have formed, how they operate, and what impact they have is part of my objective. In this regard, I see myself—like Hannerz—as “an anthropologist of transnational life” (12), whose aim is to “look at the coherence of the world in terms of interactions, relationships, and networks” (7). Working at the intersection of the personal and political, the local and global, I thus hope to contribute to broader debates about cultural processes in a post-ethnic world. **(p.37)**

World Music, Cultural Appropriation, and Intercultural Engagement

World music as a field (rather than an object) takes on some of the characteristics of postmodernism as summarised above, with musics from different places circulating via quasi-global channels and often being reconfigured in new combinations. Developments in media and technology, as well as markets, have resulted in what Steven Feld terms “the total portability, transportability, and transmutability of any and all sonic environments” (1994a: 259). Viewed positively, new opportunities have opened the door to new kinds of agency, creativity, and self-determination. From a more critical perspective, music is at best dislocated from its original functions and meanings as it takes on a new life elsewhere; at worst, it becomes part of a pastiche or fusion where the surrounding discourse of salvage, respect, and collaboration takes precedence over the quality of the musical product, and that discourse itself does not always stand up well to scrutiny.

The commodification of otherness is inevitably overcast by the shadows of racism and exploitation, prompting unfavourable comparison with historical processes of exploration and colonisation that were accompanied by rampant expropriation of raw materials—not to mention people—to swell the coffers and satisfy the desires of the so-called civilised world. For this reason, it is almost impossible to talk about world music without addressing issues of power, ownership, control, and representation. Much ink has been spent on cases of Western pop musicians appropriating exotic sounds to revitalise their professional careers; artists such as Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, Ry Cooder, Brian Eno, and David Byrne have come under fire for employing, in Carol Muller’s words, “a rhetoric of saving, recovering, and consigning to places of safe-keeping lost performances of ‘others’ silenced or devalued by external forces of modernity” (2002: 420), whilst engaging in the kind of activity that others have referred to as blatant theft.[15]

Metaphors relating to eating, and more specifically cannibalism, abound in the critical literature on postmodernism and cultural appropriation. John Storey draws attention, for example, to Fredric Jameson's frequent references to the "random cannibalization" of a postmodernism that "feeds vampirically on the past" (Storey 2003: 65–67), and Deborah Root—in a book entitled *Cannibal Culture*—alludes to "the consumption of the Other as a source of violence, passion, and spirituality" (1996: back cover). World music becomes one more object of the West's insatiable appetite. It is interesting to note the presence of culinary imagery in more positive representations of world music as well—as, for example, in the *Tower Guide to...World Music*, where its use explicitly embodies the "natural–versus–manufactured" discourse: "Just as Asian, Latin, Mediterranean and African restaurants have immeasurably improved the British palate, world music offers [a] rich, varied, fat-free alternative to the stodgy musical diet [Britain] seems stuck on" (cited in Murphy **(p.38)** 2007: 53). This, too, struggles to remain free of imperialist associations but at the same time it reminds us that the appropriation of recipes and foodstuffs has engendered comparatively little angst. Many imports from elsewhere have long been accepted—unproblematically—as part of the contemporary British way of life. Not only does today's Britain have more choirs than chip shops; it also undoubtedly has more curry houses.

Reebee Garofolo is among those who have criticised the standard models of cultural imperialism that assume the corruption of "organic" cultures by the "manufactured" cultures of the West for their tendency to privilege the role of external forces, and to conflate economic power and cultural effects and, in so doing, to neglect the creative dimensions of popular consumption (see Garofolo 1993). Timothy Taylor has taken issue with the preoccupation with postmodernism-as-style, preferring to focus on postmodernity-as-moment and to examine the manner in which "different sounds are mobilized for a vast array of reasons, but, perhaps most often, as a way of constructing and/or solidifying new identities" (1997: 203).[16] In more down-to-earth terms, Peter Martin reminds us that "detailed empirical investigations of real people in real situations tend to reveal a rather different picture from that painted by the 'grand theorists' of mass culture" (2006: 69).

In my own investigation of the world song phenomenon, I am concerned principally with the lived experience of seemingly ordinary people-who-sing who, unlike some of the magpie-like impresarios from the popular music world, are not motivated by the prospect of personal success or economic gain. In describing how these singers are on a mission, not simply to acquire new repertory, but also to explore different ways of using their voice, of being with others, and of engaging with the world-out-there, I seek to shift the emphasis away from the songs themselves as material commodities that might be gifted, traded, borrowed, or pilfered and to pay more attention to processes of creativity, engagement, and empowerment. I also show how the more dedicated

travellers to be encountered in these pages are motivated by a strong desire to reconnect the sounds they have grown to love with their source, to experience something of the reality of the people and places to which they naturally belong, and—perhaps most importantly—to “give something back”.

As we zoom in to the case in hand, the adoption of “foreign” songs by British and other non-native choirs does raise intriguing questions of a different order. Why do songs from other cultures play such a prominent part in the natural voice scene? Why do so many non-native singers identify so strongly with the music of Georgia, Cameroon, or other more “exotic” cultures? Why do they prefer to sing in languages they do not speak? What does this say about the relationship between music and identity? In the teaching process, what exactly gets transmitted or translated? How might we describe and theorise the cognitive, empirical, and interpersonal processes involved in learning unfamiliar singing styles? How far do the experiences of non-native **(p.39)** students map on to conceptualisations of music making in the culture of origin? These are among the questions to which I give detailed consideration in later chapters.

The Politics of Participation and the Art of Celebration

Christopher Small’s notion of “musicking”, as set out in his book *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998), has struck a chord with many readers in both scholarly and lay circles. Small’s basic premise is that “music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do” (1998: 2). Hence his proposal of the verb “to music”, for which he offers the definition: “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (9). The notion of “taking part” is central. “Whatever it is we are doing,” Small insists, “we are all doing it together”—and here “we” may be stretched to include others outside the space of the performance itself, such as ticket collectors, piano movers, roadies, and cleaners. In this sense, Small’s “musicking” is not too dissimilar to Becker’s “art worlds”. The act of “musicking” is further characterised as “a ritual through which all the participants explore and celebrate the relationships that constitute their social identity” (back cover).

The themes of ritual, celebration, and identity construction recur in other key works on musical participation, such as Thomas Turino’s *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (2008), which offers an eloquent exposition of the ways in which music is socially meaningful. Turino’s central thesis shares something of the spirit of Small’s musicking in its proposal that “*music* is not a unitary art form, but rather…this term refers to fundamentally distinct types of activities that fulfil different needs and ways of being human” (2008: 1). He distinguishes two fields of real-time performance, which he designates *participatory* and *presentational*.The power of his analytical paradigm rests on his insistence that participatory performance—the preferred mode in many parts

of the world—should not be viewed as in some way second-best to presentational performance representing the ideal to which one should aspire. Rather, each kind of performance should be seen to operate according to a different set of values and principles and to fulfil different functions.

Crucially, participatory performance is viewed as “a particular field of activity in which stylized sound and motion are conceptualized most importantly as heightened social interaction” (28). Making music in this way “leads to a special kind of concentration on the other people one is interacting with through sound and motion and on the activity in itself and for itself. This heightened concentration on the other participants is one reason that participatory music-dance is such a strong force for social bonding” (29). Compared with the other musical **(p.40)** fields that Turino identifies (presentational, high fidelity, and studio audio art), participatory performance is the most democratic, least competitive, and least hierarchical, and does not therefore “fit well with the broader cultural values of the capitalist-cosmopolitan formation, where competition and hierarchy are prominent and profit making is often a primary goal” (35). This in itself is one reason why participatory activities exist “beneath the radar of mainstream official and popular attention in staunchly capitalist societies” (36).

The notion of social bonding is central to the work of Robert Putnam, whose best-selling *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) offered a compelling account of the decline of social capital in America, as evidenced by the dramatic decrease, from the late 1960s, in the numbers of people joining civic associations, social clubs, churches, and unions. At the same time, people were spending less time with friends and family and giving less money to charity, trends that were exacerbated by factors ranging from the rise of television to urban sprawl. The term “social capital” as employed by Putnam refers to social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust that are among their by-products. The cardinal insight of the social capital thesis—as Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein explain in a later volume, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (2003)—is that “social networks have real value both for the people in those networks…as well as for bystanders”, with an ever-widening circle reaping rewards via a trickle-down effect (2003: 2). A healthy accumulation of social capital is also, in Putnam’s analysis, a prerequisite of a properly functioning democracy.

Putnam further distinguishes two basic types of social capital, which he calls *bonding* and *bridging*. Networks of the bonding kind connect people “who are similar in crucial respects” and tend to be inward-looking, whereas those of the bridging kind bring together different types of people and tend to be outward-looking. The former are characterised as “a kind of sociological Super Glue” and the latter “a sociological WD-40” (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 2).[17] Because of the introverted nature of bonding social capital, a society possessing this type

alone will see its citizens “segregated into mutually hostile camps”, as in Belfast, Beirut, or Bosnia (the examples given by Putnam). A pluralist democracy depends on a healthy dose of bridging social capital that requires people to embrace heterogeneity by transcending their social, political, and professional identities and connecting with others who are unlike themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, Putnam refers to active involvement in, rather than passive consumption of, the arts as a means of generating social capital, and identifies art as being “especially useful in transcending conventional social barriers”. He also makes explicit reference to singing as one of the leisure activities that brings people together and increases their social capital. “Singing together,” he observes, “does not require shared ideology or shared social or ethnic provenance” (2000: 411). **(p.41)**

The theoretical basis for Barbara Ehrenreich’s arguments in her book *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (2007) chimes in many ways with that of Putnam, with at least some of the attributes of social capital resurfacing in the more appealing guise of collective joy or ecstasy. Adopting a turn of phrase coined by French theorist Guy Debord, Ehrenreich characterises the present age as “the society of the spectacle”,[18] where “instead of generating their own collective pleasures, people absorb, or consume, the spectacles of commercial entertainment, nationalist rituals, and the consumer culture, with its endless advertisements for the pleasure of individual ownership” (2007: 250). This kind of top-down spectacle, with its power to control and exclude, finds its healthier antithesis in festivity, where “the music invites everyone to the dance” and “shared food briefly undermines the privilege of class”, enabling us to “step out of our assigned roles and statuses...and into a brief utopia defined by egalitarianism, creativity, and mutual love” (253).

Commenting on the extent to which the loss of “community” has been both lamented and theorised, Ehrenreich argues that “the loss of *ecstatic* pleasure, of the kind once routinely generated by rituals involving dancing, music, and so on, deserves the same attention accorded to *community* and to be equally mourned” (19). In her analysis, the capacity for collective joy is deeply encoded in our fundamental makeup as human beings but, because of its emancipatory qualities, is viewed by those in power as a threat to their authority. “At some point,” Ehrenreich writes in the opening sentence of her chapter “Killing Carnival: Reformation and Repression”, “in town after town throughout the northern Christian world, the music stops” (97). The “ecstatic possibility”, already banished from the churches, was now driven from the streets and squares as well.

This widespread repression of festivity was seen by Max Weber, as Ehrenreich goes on to note, as a by-product of capitalism, which demanded that the middle classes learn to defer gratification while the lower classes had to be transformed into “a disciplined, factory-ready, working class” faced with “the new necessity

of showing up for work sober and on time, six days a week” (100). Holidays had no place in a system whose only concern was to maximise productivity and profit. Capitalism went hand-in-hand with Protestantism, which (as Ehrenreich notes) Weber describes in *The Protestant Ethic* as “descend[ing] like a frost on the life of ‘Merrie Old England’” (101). This in turn had negative consequences for individual as well as social well being: Ehrenreich sees a direct link between the decline of festivity, and hence opportunities for the expression of collective joy, and the rise of melancholy or depression that from the seventeenth century took on epidemic proportions. This interpretation adds even greater urgency to the project of reclaiming the right to joy. **(p.42)**

Dancing in the Streets

All these activities—singing, dancing, feasting, celebrating, and making merry—lie at the heart of the Thames Festival, where this chapter began. In his introductory note in the 2011 programme booklet, director Adrian Evans wrote: “The Thames Festival celebrates London and the iconic river at its heart…by dancing in the streets, feasting on bridges, racing on the river and playing at the water’s edge.” On the first day of the festival, Southwark Bridge was transformed into a giant banqueting space to host the Feast on the Bridge, with long rows of trestle tables—punctuated from time to time by food and drink stalls—lining each side of the closed-off road and visitors invited to “eat, drink, dance and make merry”. Further opportunities to dance in the streets were offered by the Al Fresco Tango workshop and dance programme at The Scoop on Saturday and the rolling programme of live bands and DJs that kept people on their feet at the Lady Luck Jive Stage near the Southbank Centre on Sunday. When the Sing for Water choir belted out its Motown number and members of the audience at The Scoop rose in response to the injunction to “dance in the streets”, other festival-goers across the site were already in full swing.

As I write these words, news drops onto my Facebook page of a more spontaneous outbreak of singing and dancing in Totnes, a small market town in southwest England. I follow the link to a short film that has been posted on YouTube.[19] The credits tell me that it is the eleventh of November, a date traditionally celebrated as Armistice or Remembrance Day, commemorating the end of the First World War and remembering the millions who lost their lives. This year it is 11/11/11, a synchronicity that is being marked by other kinds of grass-roots happenings in different parts of the world. The Totnes “moment” has been inspired by Alex Hanley’s vision of mass breakouts of flash-mob dancing in celebration of the interconnectedness of all life on earth and has been co-created by a small team that includes three natural voice practitioners, Roz Walker, Helen Yeomans, and Susie Prater, alongside Susannah Darling Khan, co-director of the School of Movement Medicine. Members of three local community choirs, Global Harmony, Glorious Chorus, and Tula Mama, feature among those who have gathered at the market square—in the rain—to perform a dance routine set to the South African song “Bambalela”, meaning “Never Give Up!” Curious

onlookers begin to clap their hands and move to the beat, passing vehicles sound their horns, and a wave of umbrellas dances above the crowd.

Notes:

(1.) The video tracks on the companion website are taken from Sing for Water 2012, which I was able to film. They feature extracts from a comparable set of songs.

(2.) By December 2012, the running total, according to WaterAid's records, was £672,719. This did not include receipts from events held in Australia or other donations from choirs and individuals who have chosen WaterAid as their nominated charity for initiatives additional to those billed specifically as Sing for Water events.

(3.) Here and in other parts of the book, details about individual practitioners may relate to the times and events being described rather than being current at the time of writing. Up-to-date details (current as of August 2013) are given in the biographical listing on the companion website.

(4.) When this book went to press, a short video compilation titled *Sing for Water 2008 Trailer* was still available online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEolWXnGKVo.

(5.) See http://www.pinetreeweb.com, acc. July 10, 2013. The first World Scout Jamboree was held in London in 1920. Subsequent jamborees (which take place roughly every four years) were in Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands, France, and Austria. Since the late 1950s, locations have included the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Chile, and Thailand.

(6.) At a local level, the centre has worked in partnership with the Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to promote the role of music and arts in healthcare and health promotion.

(7.) *The Snowman* is an animated film made in 1982 by Dianne Jackson, based on the children's picture book by Raymond Briggs. Now a classic, it is an indispensable part of Christmas television programming in the UK. The film's theme song, "Walking in the Air" (sung by Aled Jones), was written by Howard Blake.

(8.) The endnotes to the chapters in Alquist 2006 are a source of further references to writings on choral music.

(9.) It seems incongruous that a choir with one of the most colourful sounds—the *Kwaya ya Upendo* that is the subject of Barz's chapter—should appear on the front cover in a black and white image, its members, standing on the steps of the Azania Front Lutheran Cathedral in Dar es Salaam, clad in ankle-length dark robes with white trim and holding their music books, presenting the archetypal image of the church choir. This is a far cry—in visual terms, at least—from the singers who grace my own cover.

(10.) A more extensive review of the literature on music in relation to health and wellbeing is included in chapter 7.

(11.) Also relevant to a cross-cultural approach to music and health is new work that is now being brought together under the umbrella of medical ethnomusicology, introduced in *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology* (Koen 2009).

(12.) See especially Gary Ansell's chapters, "Belonging through Musicing: Explorations of Musical Community" and "Where Performing Helps: Processes and Affordances of Performance in Community Music Therapy".

(13.) This sociocultural move is reflected in the titles of two other key volumes, *Culture-Centered Music Therapy* (Stige 2002) and *Contemporary Voices in Music Therapy: Communication, Culture, and Community* (Kenny and Stige 2002).

(14.) In the mythic past, songs were also learned from jaguars, mice, enemies who lived underground, and Suyá in the process of being transformed into animals. By the time of Seeger's work, visiting anthropologists had also been added to this list.

(15.) Among other critiques of these trends, see especially Feld 1994b, 2000a and 2000b. For broader discussions of cultural appropriation not confined to music, see Marcus and Myers 1995; Ziff and Rao 1997.

(16.) For other critiques of the cultural imperialism stance, see e.g. Appadurai 1990.

(17.) The terminology of bridging and bonding was first introduced by Ross Gittell and Avis Vidal (1998).

(18.) *Society of the Spectacle* is the title of Debord's now-classic book, first published in 1968.

(19.) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6vWOX3FCuM, acc. November 16, 2011.