

Spring ✧ 2007 ✧ Free

# Many Hands

A MAGAZINE FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

## INSIDE

- ✧ Get fit with an exercise program that's right for you
- ✧ Yoga offers relief for that pain in the neck
- ✧ The magic of dolphins, and their healing touch
- ✧ Your home and the psychology of colors
- ✧ Snatam Kaur spreads peace through music

**Robin Lane: Giving women a voice**

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#### REGIONAL COVERAGE

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# Heart to Heart

## From the publisher

As I sit in the depths of February's cold to pen this note for publication in March, I think of the time capsule, and know that by the time you "open this" to read, we'll be talking about spring. The new clock change for Daylight Saving Time happens on March 11 this year, accelerating the feel of the season. I'll be starting seeds soon, and I've already begun perusing the gardeners' catalogs. Change is the natural order of things. (The punster in me is tempted to say "the natural ardor of things.") We have another recipe to add to our modest collection (see below). We received a number of compliments about our winter edition, and I thank in particular Lucy Pickett and Alan Lecker, who labored mightily to make that happen. I hope you enjoy this issue as much.

On March 31 is the Celebrate Peace Concert with Snatam Kaur. My wife, Linda, and I will be there and hope you'll join us. You'll find information within these pages — and on the Many Hands Web site at [www.manyhands.com](http://www.manyhands.com), where you'll also find articles from past issues, interviews, tips, recipes and my daily note to you about items that come up between issues — and from time to time free tickets to local events. It's a busy site because this is such an active area for holistic health professionals. Check it out.

— PARIS FINLEY

## From the editor

Robin Lane has been making wonderful music for some time now, but she's also one of those extraordinary individuals who is making a difference in the lives of other people. In this edition, you'll read about her work using music therapy to help heal the victims of abuse. You'll also read about another singer, Snatam Kaur, who is using her voice to spread the message of peace. This edition also offers tips on getting fit for spring, explains how yoga can relieve neck pain, explores the benefits of color therapy, discusses a Reiki model for volunteering, and demonstrates the magical healing powers of dolphins. As always, we welcome suggestions on articles for future editions.

— ALAN LECKER

## Weeknight Steam Stir-fry

*From Patricia, a "busy kitchen designer" from West Dover:*

Put a large sautee pan on the stove with a quarter-inch to half-inch of water to cover the bottom; add a bayleaf if you wish. Cover and turn on high. Add pre-packaged or prepared (or frozen if necessary) vegetables, in order of cooking times — e.g. whole baby carrots, cauliflower florets, broccoli crowns, etc. Replace cover. Start slicing and adding vegetables that need less cooking time, replacing the lid each time — e.g. pea pods, zucchini, summer squash, onions, mushrooms, bottled chopped garlic, etc. Then add quick-cook vegetables like spinach or pre-cooked vegetables like spaghetti squash or beans. Replace cover, as before, for a couple of minutes.

By now, most of the water will be gone. Remove cover, stir and turn up heat if necessary to "dry" the mixture a little more. Now you can add whatever you wish for flavor — e.g. olive oil and herbs. If you wish, stir in smaller quantities of pre-cooked meat (chicken breast, turkey, Italian sausage) or pasta; or top with seafood (poached frozen salmon filet, scallops broiled in the toaster oven). Cover to heat again. You'll be sitting down to a healthy dinner within 20 minutes of walking in the door.

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PHOTO BY EVANGELINE LANE

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## GUIDELINES & POLICIES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Many Hands welcomes submissions from our readers. Articles should contain information that is relevant to holistic health, personal growth, alternative medicine, spirituality, human potential, or the frontier sciences.

Articles should provide new information that is clearly substantiated and detailed with appropriate references provided.

Articles should include a brief author's biography (75 words). Maximum length should be 1,000 words. Longer articles will either be returned or shortened by the editor. The editor reserves the right to edit all material for the purpose of clarity, spacing and content. Writers should avoid the use of jargon.

All work must be submitted in electronic format (as a text file or a Word document, preferably) with little or no formatting and no embedded graphics. Sending work as an email attachment is the fastest and easiest way to submit.

Many Hands does not pay for unsolicited articles. An article may be held for future publication for as long as one year. If Many Hands does publish an article, Many Hands retains the copyright to that article. The publisher of Many Hands must agree to any requests to publish the article elsewhere.

Articles should be sent to [editor@manyhands.com](mailto:editor@manyhands.com) or mailed to Many Hands, PO Box 299, Northampton, MA 01061

## LETTERS POLICY

Many Hands welcomes letters from readers for publication. They should be sent to [editor@manyhands.com](mailto:editor@manyhands.com). Letters are subject to editing and condensing. Please put "Letter to Many Hands" in the subject line and include hometown and a daytime phone number (not for publication) where you can be contacted.

## On the wings of a songbird

*Robin Lane uses music to help victims of abuse*

BY ALAN LECKER

Singer/songwriter Robin Lane has found a new venue for her considerable talents. She is using music therapy to help victims of abuse find their own voices.

Lane has performed with such artists as Neil Young, but is perhaps best known for her own band, Robin Lane and the Chartbusters, a Boston-based group that gained a strong following in the early '80s.

Having moved to western Massachusetts several years ago, she continues to perform. But more recently, her strong, soothing voice has graced the halls of the Turners Falls Women's Resource Center, where she conducts 16-week musical therapy workshops for abuse victims.

The program is called "A Woman's Voice," and Lane seeks to empower the

participants through singing and songwriting. Each participant is encouraged to write down her thoughts, feelings and emotions in the form of a song, and then perform it against the backdrop of Lane's supportive vocals and keen guitar playing.

The results are apparent in each of the four CDs that workshop participants have recorded at the end of their sessions; the CDs are sold to help raise funds for the program. The women are transformed under Lane's tutelage; they gain a measure of strength and self-esteem that furthers them on their path to recovery.

I started my conversation with Robin by asking her about the various stages of recovery the women are in when they first arrive at her workshops.

**Robin:** There are different degrees of recovery for each of the women that participate in



PHOTO BY EVANGELINE LANE

A Woman's Voice. I've never had someone who was in the midst of experiencing the trauma. Usually the women I work with are somewhat into their recovery and have dealt with the heavier issues, but not always. Post-traumatic stress disorder is prevalent, though, and we have to be careful nothing is occurring within the workshop that would re-traumatize or trigger a participant.

That being said, you can't always predict what

might set someone off; you just never know. But I am pretty careful and we have agreements at the beginning of each 16-week program. We also have a co-facilitator in the group now who is supposed to help anyone who may be having a difficult time.

The first Woman's Voice I taught, I really didn't have a clue about the repercussions of trauma even though I have experienced my own. I was facilitating the program by myself with maybe 12 participants in a

room. We all had headphones on and I was recording one of the women's songs to a click track, which helps me keep in time, like a metronome. The woman whose song I was trying to record was triggered by the "click, click, click." For her, it was the hammering of the nails on the coffin she was put into as a child by her foster parents and others for their occult rituals. This poor woman freaked. At the time I didn't know how to respond to her, but other women in the workshop who had had more training than I knew to follow her out of the room and comfort her so that she would feel safe enough to rejoin the group and recording of her song.

Later, when she told me what had happened to her, I was overjoyed that she was alive and healing herself through therapy, school, singing and songwriting. Since that time I have been trained in various ways to be more trauma-informed, but at the same time set boundaries and be able to do what I do best, which is bring out the story via song

from those who have experienced trauma — and so many of us have experienced trauma to one degree or another.

**Alan:** What kinds of issues do they face as a result of their trauma?

**Robin:** Most assuredly mental health issues, low self-esteem, the inability to take good and nurturing care of themselves or believe that they and their stories matter. Poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, more violence. Usually those who have suffered from childhood abuse later find themselves in domestic situations that are far from healthy. Until we deal with our own histories and heal from the original trauma, it is often very hard to imagine yourself having a meaningful life.

Trauma is a complicated fix. Peer-run creative workshops and support groups with others who have experienced similar situations help to validate the truth of these women. By sharing our stories in a safe place, we can begin to heal. Being silent about

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## Robin's discography

Robin Lane was born and raised in Los Angeles. Early in her career, she sang with Neil Young and Crazy Horse, performing on their album "Everybody Knows This Is



Nowhere." After moving to the Boston area, she teamed up with Asa Brebner and Leroy Radcliffe, formerly of the Modern Lovers, to form Robin Lane and the Chartbusters. Their first, self-titled album drew rave reviews. It was followed by "5 Live," a five-song concert album. The band's third effort, released in 1981, was "Imitation Life." In 1984, Lane and members of the Chartbusters released "Heart Connection," a four-song LP. In 1995, Lane released a solo album, "Catbird Seat" and, in 2003, she reunited with the Chartbusters to record the album, "Piece of Mind."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

the abuse and pretending it didn't happen will only have it come out in other ways.

Keeping it silent is what kills us or others and destroys lives. Being allowed to tell our stories and break the silence is key to healing and taking control of our lives for trauma survivors. As Carl Jung said: "The reason for evil in the world is that people are not able to tell their own stories."

Childhood and domestic abuse are in epidemic proportions. Violence against women and children goes unreported. We have to break the silence, or it eats you alive. The time is now. Survivors of violence are everywhere. Whether you know it or not, you know someone who was a victim of abuse.

**Alan:** How do they come to the point where they decide to begin healing?

**Robin:** This, of course, is different for each person. I would think it's when you just can't stand the way you're living anymore. Sometimes it

takes falling flat on your face to realize you need to ask for help. To heal we do need help

**Alan:** That alone must require a lot of strength and courage.

**Robin:** Well, either strength and courage, or no alternative. Certainly we all must choose to live our lives, to be or not to be, as the bard said. Do we want to continue living in the dark, miserable but not being able to name what caused the misery? Sometimes it begins as desperation — hitting rock bottom. The strength and courage come in the process of dealing with what happened to you, exposing it to the light of day, illuminating the abuse rather than allowing it to fester. But it takes a community or a village. I'm not sure you can heal alone. Each person comes to the need for healing in so many different ways and some don't come at all.

**Alan:** How does the process work during the 16-week sessions? How do you get them to open up and then take part in the songwriting and singing?

**Robin:** A lot of time during the first session is spent listening to songs from other artists, always with lyrics that speak of deeper issues,

sometimes politics, healing, anger, sadness — all the emotions. On that first day, the women are already writing lyrics, having spent 40 minutes or so immersed in the songs of the various songwriters. You can't help but come up with at least a couple lines. Quite often the beginning of one or two songs is born on that first day.

As the weeks go by, a sense of camaraderie is established — "Hey, we're doing something powerful and unique here." They feel safe and acknowledged for their own sake. Most of them have never felt this inclusive welcoming before. As the 16 weeks go by they are immersed in the creative process, writing and singing their songs and listening to all the songs as they are recorded.

**Alan:** How much do you have to coach them on their singing?

**Robin:** I simply encourage them and it usually works out. There have only been a few that come to the program believing they can sing. One of the women went to Julliard and is already a great musician and songwriter. Another woman grew up in a cult around here and was told that she couldn't sing at all. If a

woman doesn't want to sing her own song we get one of the other women to sing or I sing it. This is a songwriting workshop primarily.

**Alan:** The participants seem to emerge with a sense of group unity. How soon do they start coalescing as a group?

**Robin:** Usually by the third or fourth week a level of trust develops as each of us watches the others taking risks, either by singing their song or working with me on their song in front of the others. Another thing I do that is great for this sense of unity and community and shared experience is to have all contribute to a group song. We have group songs on most of the Woman's Voice CDs.

**Alan:** How does the experience of these workshops affect you personally? Is it rewarding, satisfying, or is it ever emotionally draining?

**Robin:** Oh boy! I came to this with no idea what I was getting into. As far as I knew I was teaching some women how to write songs. As time went on and more workshops happened I heard from the women and from others who listened to the songs that there was a great need, a universal spirit of healing. I am so thankful that I

have the ability to do this. I never knew I could do this and learn so much about myself at the same time. So for me it's an amazing blessing and a spiritual gift not only to give it away but to get so much back.

**Alan:** How did you decide you wanted to conduct these workshops?

**Robin:** Magic. Actually it does feel like that. Synchronicity to be sure. I was walking around Turners Falls one day and walked in the door thinking it was the community health center. They were running a writing group and asked me if I wanted to join. I said "OK," sat down and wrote. When the women got to know me and hear of my background with my band and such, they asked me if I could teach songwriting for the women who came to the center. With the help of a grant from the Western Massachusetts Training Consortium, I was able to do this. So you see, there is serendipity in all this.

I had no idea that it would be as profound as it is. I feel like I've been called to do this and that it is a very important thing. Over the last few years I've seen the growth in the women involved, the empowerment,

the gaining of self-esteem needed to change their own lives and heal from what they couldn't address or express before they participated in A Woman's Voice. This has been an educational experience for me and has been deeply healing and transforming, for myself and those who have participated.

I am grateful that, for some reason, I can tap into the creative potential and help bring it forth. I am moved each time I see how the participants become filled with joy as they realize their gifts for lyric and song. Something occurs in these workshops, each and every one of them, which exceeds anything I have ever felt before, except possibly improvising with like-minded musicians.

**Alan:** Is there a certain power or magical quality in music that makes it work so well as a form of therapy?

**Robin:** Yes, music is out of this world. Music is our soul; it floats and you borrow a bit of it here or there. It's ephemeral and it's above the struggles of our daily existence — and yet it's part of everything. Maybe music is God or God is

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

music. You can put notes on paper, you can harness music into a song, but it exists on its own. It's powerful and it is healing.

**Alan:** Has songwriting offered a form of healing for you through the years?

**Robin:** Songwriting has always brought release to me. Improvising spur-of-the-moment playing with other musicians is a favorite pastime of mine. I don't know where I'd be if I didn't have music. I've lived in it all of my life, since I was small. My grandmother said I sang before I talked.

**Alan:** How would you describe your own spiritual beliefs?

**Robin:** I still love Jesus but there is too much division and hatred in the name

of Jesus today and I just can't stand it. I hate the divisive tactics that are being used in the name of Christianity. I am sad for who I think Jesus is — the Prince of Peace, a God of Love.

I see God in my back yard, which is a golden-hued meadow with deer, coyotes and oh so many birds. I'm still developing all my ideas about what life is and why we're here. I know that for me the way to joy is through helping others and acceptance of who I am.

**Alan:** What inspires you?

**Robin:** Great conversations, clouds, trees, animals, Beethoven, "The Artist's Way," Bjork, good poetry, writing songs to poems, studying and learning from an inspired teacher. People who beat the odds. People who give of what they have. People who have compassion and are helping to make the world a better place. Maybe most of all kindness.

## For more information

To learn more about A Woman's Voice, visit the program's Web site at [www.awomansvoice.net](http://www.awomansvoice.net). The four CDs produced at the workshops are available at the Web site to purchase.

For information on funding, participation or having Robin facilitate A Woman's Voice workshop, contact the Women's Resource Center at (413) 863-4805 or send an email to [awomansvoice@randomrogue.com](mailto:awomansvoice@randomrogue.com).

Visit Robin Lane's Web site at [www.randomrogue.com/robinlane](http://www.randomrogue.com/robinlane) to learn more about her recording career as well as her upcoming concerts.