

## Interview with Amanda Relph

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*Amanda Relph teaches voice work, overtone singing and sound healing. She is based in Wiltshire, England. This interview was conducted as part of the preparation for a series of articles published in Caduceus Journal on Overtone singing.*

Brian Lee:

How did you start with overtone singing?

Amanda Relph:

I learned overtone singing from a German girl called Marianne Wex who learnt it from Stephanie Wolf. And when Marianne went back to Germany I started teaching it here instead of her.

B: So the overtoning for you is very much part of general therapeutic voice work.

AR: Yes. I worked in a healing centre and we used it for healing. We always worked in pairs and with the overtoning somebody would stand over the person's body. The person would be lying on the couch and the person who was overtoning would put their hands above the person in the auric field and would do overtoning very gently down the body. Or they'd stand at their feet and send the overtones, and the other person would be holding the energy at the head. And once we worked on a girl who had Muscular Dystrophy and you could see the energy going up the body. It was like a fish, a whole wave of a really paralysed body moved and it was really exciting because it was the first time there was a visual, physical thing from what the overtoning was producing and that was very exciting.

B. Do you feel it matters which way the overtones are produced or do you feel it's the sound that's produced that's the important thing?

AR. I feel it's really good to learn everything. I think the more you can learn, the more sounds you can make. It's more resonant the way that some people like Rollin Rachele and Jill Purce do it. The Stephanie Wolf way, the way that I've been teaching isn't quite so strong but it's more opening from the voice production point of view. It opens the throat, the soft palate, the hard palate and it opens the register of the voice. By keeping the tongue flat in the mouth at the back and just using the tip, it allows that opening to be and it allows the healing. But it's not so good for the overtones. The other way technique directs the sound into a completely different place and probably produces stronger overtones.

B: Would you say that your emphasis is on voice production rather than the overtoning?

AR: Originally the way that I developed the overtoning was through teaching people who thought they couldn't sing and they were able to make a different sound and then they could string some notes together and they were already starting to sing. And they were listening because they had to listen and they found that they could sing in tune. So it was actually helping people to sing. So I then started branching off into the overtoning in order to help people to find their voices with breathing techniques which I think is incredibly important for everything, with relaxation for shoulders and neck. And that's how it stemmed on into more vocal production.

And now it's branching out again, into using the overtoning in a very direct way for healing. I'm now directing particular notes into different parts of the body, and it's the overtone that gets the fantastic clarity. So instead of giving a general bathing of overtone sound to the person, you direct the sound specifically into the part that somebody has hurt with different notes and the overtone becomes muffled where the blockage is in the body.

B: So you tune a particular fundamental and then you find an overtone and is that an intuitive thing, a thing you just find by feeling?

AR: Yes that's right. Like I've seen Jonathan Goldman doing up the spine. He was going up the spine and he could hear in his voice where the chakras were imbalanced. Sometimes the sound takes on a wobbling or ululating quality when it hits a particular part of the body. And I'm coming to the conclusion that that's not a necessarily healthy sound.

There are three sounds. One is a really dead sound that the voice makes which means that the sound isn't actually penetrating into that spot where the blockage is. The next you hear it clearing and it gets to an amazingly clear note and then I feel that it's really penetrating into that space. The ululating sound, I think it's something to do with the auric field. It usually comes when you're much further away from the body. I did somebody in terrible pain the other day, really bad pain, and I couldn't get close to him at all and the sound was very ululating. And I had to be terribly gentle. Somebody else I did who had an ovarian cyst, I was quite far away from her for the first treatment, the second treatment I was getting a bit closer, and with the third treatment I really got right into that place and the ululating stopped.

B. So the ululating is like you're touching something that doesn't want to be touched.

AR. Yes. That's what I think. What I'd like to do now, I'd like to have some case histories. I've done it for five years, but if I concentrated on four people, with four different things. One has really bad rheumatoid arthritis. I've only given her one treatment. I think it's really helpful. Her neck was much looser but she's very shut off in herself. The girl with the ovarian cyst thinks it's absolutely brilliant and she definitely has had a shift in her pain. There's somebody who's been hurt in her coccyx, she was very badly hit, and she'd had physiotherapy for 6 weeks and the woman couldn't do anything with her and said I'm sorry I can't help. She's in terrible pain. And the doctor said well you might have to have an injection, it's the only thing I can think of to help. She didn't want that. She came to see me, I gave her zero balancing which is the bodywork I do and then I put the sound into the coccyx and because it's difficult to get into that place because it's a fairly intimate place but the sound just goes in there with no problem at all. And after three sessions, each time it progressed she was practically pain free for a whole two or three weeks. That was a very nice way of knowing that the sound really penetrated and released the blockage, the tension and the held pain.

B. What about internal organs?

AR. Well there was a woman came to me and she actually was the wife of an anaesthetist who had a pain clinic. She had a pain underneath the liver and she didn't know what it was. She had it checked up and there was nothing wrong. But it was something to do with tension because each time she got a little bit tense it was like a ball appeared there. And the sound used to disperse it. And I know that was the sound and that was right into an organ but I didn't know exactly *what* the blockage was. I could hear, when I sang into it *where* it was but I can't tell you what it was. She didn't know and the medical profession didn't know either. It was definitely a knotted tension in the intestines somewhere.

B. Just to get some of the techniques clear. There's the sound bath where you just surround the person with sound.

AR. I tried to write down the notes that I was singing and they seem to change. I can't tell you what harmonic is above my fundamental. I'm not musically trained. I wrote down the fundamental I started using because Olivia Dewhurst Maddox has written a book and she says you know like "F is for the liver"

B. What's your feeling about that?

AR. Well because I haven't got a tuning fork, I can't tell you if I'm singing an F or a C till after I've done it when I can check up. I remember what I've sung and I go to the piano and I hit the note and "Oh yes, It's a C this time. Oh gosh it's a D flat." It seems to be different and the only way I can hear is what the sound is telling me. So I'll sing three different notes into the body

and each note will give a different experience of the sound. It's like the way your hands pick up with healing, what's going on in a body with a vibration, you feel pain, you feel a pulse or you feel hot, or you feel cold, the voice does the same thing. You hear what's going on. You hear the wobbling (ululation) or it's a complete crystal, it's like a jewel of sound, you can't imagine your voice could make a clear sound like that. Or it's completely muffled and dead.

B. In the research that I've been doing, when people talk about the therapeutic aspects of sound and overtone it seems that there are two aspects of it. Firstly, if I sing it's good for me. Then there's that other approach, which is singing into another person's energy field, and making sound for other people.

AR. In a way it works both ways. You can do singing for Absent Healing. There's a couple who were kidnapped, I know the mother very well and we meet every week and we've been doing a lot of sound healing together because she came to one of my workshops and she's interested and so in a group we've been exploring and we sing their names to them. I know when you're doing absent healing it's energy following thought, it's the transmission of energy, but the sound goes through. So you can sing a note to somebody. At the same time you're singing it, like when you're doing healing you're receiving that sound inside your body and you feel very tranquil as well. It works both ways.

One thing we haven't covered is healing in a group where you've got one person lying down on the floor and they say they've got a bad tummy you all tone, your own thing, improvised sound again, into that person, they feel fantastic and usually the stomach ache's gone. So it's not directing it particularly like me singing into the knee, or into the stomach, it's just sound being directed into that person lying on the floor and they will have a healing experience.

B. But obviously you've worked with the group and the group has understood how.

AR. No, I teach it. I go to the psychic centre, the College of Psychic Studies and I teach sound for instance for one hour to people who are doing a colour course. And I go in and I teach the sound. So we'll start off doing relaxation, breathing exercises just to get the breath down into the diaphragm, and then we'll just make tones and hummings, to get the sound resonating up and then we'll start exploring that sound, maybe through using a word like "peace" or "joy", allowing people to find more explorations. And then when they've found a little bit more fluidity in their sounds, then we'll have somebody lying on the floor and we'll direct the sound to them. Then people improvise and do what they like.

B. So this is part of a day long workshop.

AR. No. It's only an hour you can do all that in. Then there's another thing. I'm hopeless at remembering people's names so people say their names and we sing their names to them. And that's fantastic and it sounds like a heavenly choir with your name being sung. And that's a wonderful healing experience and sometimes it can be very emotional because it touches the very core of you.

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B. So do you feel that overtone singing opens the possibility for energies to come through you?

AR. Yes, because when you're giving somebody colour healing I'm mentally visualising colour. By thinking of a colour like the spring green of the beech leaves when they come out, that colour is being directed through your hands into the person's body. With the overtone, I'm hearing what I'm doing. I'm hearing the notes, so I'm using the overtone like my hands to pick up what's going on in the body. Well you offer yourself as a channel. Whether you're doing the zero balancing which is more with the fingertips, it's more on an interface, it's not a channelling therapy, it's more similar to acupuncture. You put your finger onto a place in the body and it's like a stone falling into a still bit of water, the ripples are going to go out. And that's what the overtone does. So the sound just drops into that place and allows the ripples to extend themselves. I'm conscious of what my hands are doing, I'm conscious of what my

voice is doing. In the shamanic way people go out of their bodies into an altered state of consciousness which I'm aware of but it's not the way that I work.

AR. But also the recipient has to because a long time ago I had a little boy who broke his neck, and he was paralysed and I did some overtoneing into him and some healing and the next time I went to treat him he said "Oh please don't make that dreadful noise." So he found it a dreadful noise and didn't want it. And somebody else has to go through that barrier, like they do with healing in order to let that sound really penetrate into them, in which case they get into their altered state of consciousness then the healing works.

B. Then they allow the healing.

AR. Whereas if they're going to say "That's rather an awful noise" the healing is still going to work but they're not going to get so much benefit from it as if they let themselves into the sound and then the sound is really going to penetrate into that place.

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