

# NIROSHINI

FROM HIGH NOTES TO  
HEALING HANDS: THE  
COUNTERTENOR  
TURNED  
CRANIOSACRAL  
THERAPIST"

Interview

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ANDREW  
KOVAL-RADLEY

MINI MAGAZINE

# BEYOND THE SPOTLIGHT: ANDREW KOVAL-RADLEY'S EVOLUTION FROM COUNTERTENOR TO HEALER

Andrew Koval-Radley's journey in the world of music began with his education at Clare College, Cambridge, where he was a choral scholar and continued with advanced studies at the Royal Academy of Music and the Paris Conservatoire. Renowned for his exceptional talent as a countertenor, Andrew captivated audiences with his performances of great operatic roles, particularly those written for the alto castrato voice, by composers such as George Frideric Handel. His dedication to his craft and his unique vocal abilities, allowed him to carve out a distinguished place in the classical music world.

His illustrious career included performances at prestigious venues and festivals worldwide. Some of his notable roles included the title role in Handel's "Orlando", Hamor in Handel's "Jephtha", The Refugee in Jonathan Dove's "Flight" and the title role in a new opera by Thomas Oleson "Dorian Gray". Andrew's artistry was not confined to the stage; his solo CD, "Conversazioni I", was met with critical acclaim, showcasing his ability to bring the dramatic cantatas and instrumental works of the 17th and 18th centuries to life. His recordings and live performances were celebrated for their emotional depth and technical precision, earning him a loyal following and critical praise.

Following on from his success in the operatic world, Andrew felt a calling to explore a different path. His transition from countertenor to craniosacral therapist marks a significant shift in his career, reflecting his deep interest in holistic healing and the well-being of others. Craniosacral therapy, a gentle, hands-on approach that focuses on relieving tension and pain through the manipulation of the cranial bones and the sacrum, aligns with Andrew's compassionate and meticulous nature. His dedication to his new field is as profound as his commitment to music. He brings to his practice the same level of excellence, sensitivity and passion that distinguished his performances. His ability to connect with people, understand their needs and provide healing is a testament to his multifaceted talents.

Andrew's remarkable achievements as a countertenor and his inspiring journey into the realm of craniosacral therapy, serves as a beautiful reminder that following one's passion can lead to extraordinary transformations and a life rich with diverse accomplishments. His story is an inspiration to those who seek to blend their artistic talents with a desire to contribute to the well-being of others, demonstrating that it is never too late to pursue a new path and make a meaningful impact in a different field.



NIROSHINI 360

The view over reed beds and Hepworth's Family of Man  
Photo Philip Vile  
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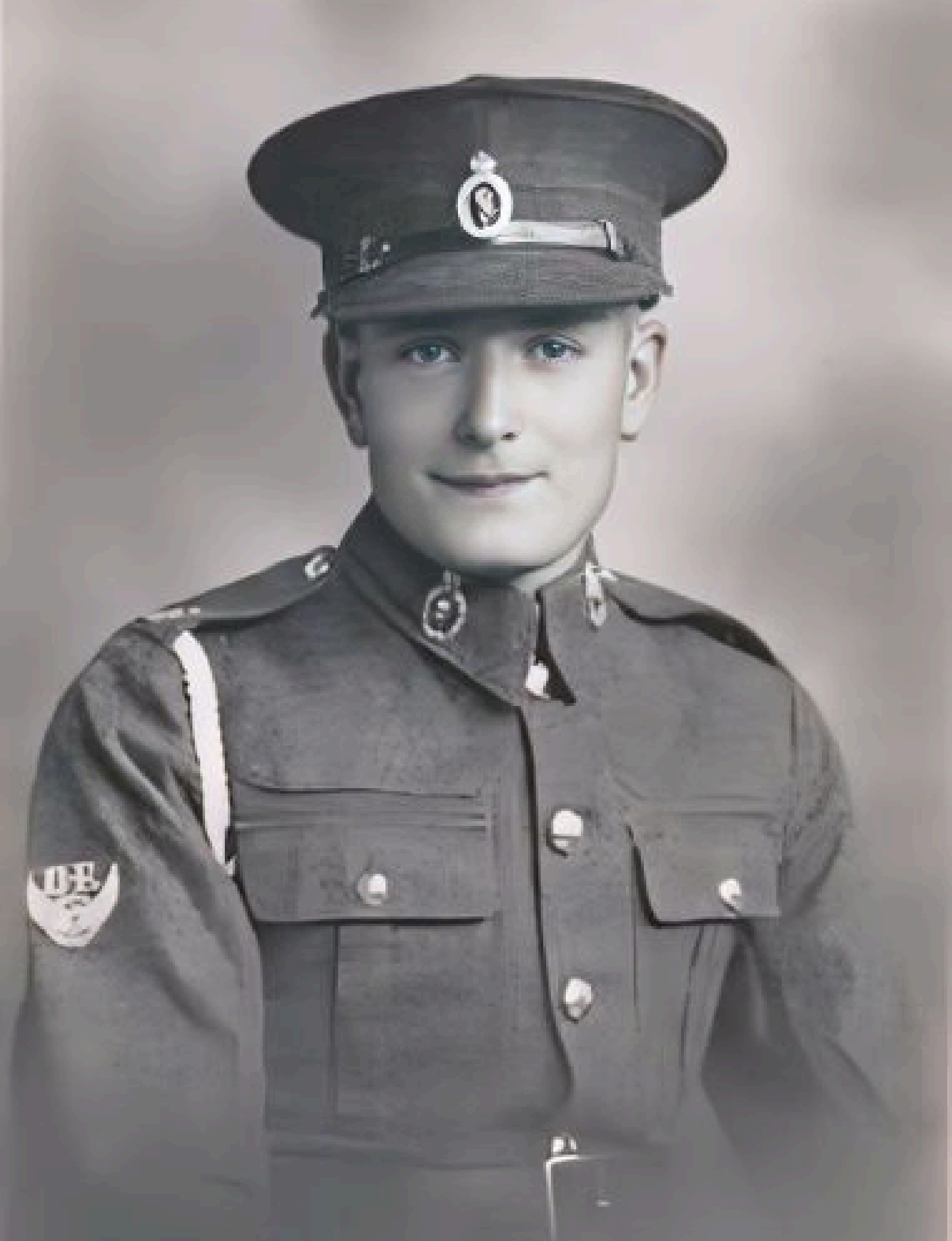
Handel's "Messiah" in the Hallgrímskirkja, Reykjavík, Iceland  
1st January 2009

# *I was born and raised in South Croydon*

I was born and raised in leafy South Croydon; it was a nice place to be brought up. I have an older brother and younger sister. Originally there were three of us, but my middle sister died when I was 9 months from leukaemia.

My mother's parents married in the 1920s and put up their first two up two down house near Portsmouth, on farmland they bought for £300. Amazingly, my parents ended up building their dream house on this land; the very land my mother had been born on.

My father's father died when I was 5. He worked for the ICI on the East End Docks but later became a dispatch rider in Africa during the Second World War. Although he died from cancer when I was quite young, I always wonder if he maybe saw things that he didn't process.



Andrew's grandfather in his 20s

## *Super Trooper!*

The unique thing about having the age difference between my siblings – my brother is 5 years older, my sister 5 years younger – was that it meant I got to spend a lot of time alone with mum. There was a lot of laughter and happiness. Looking back at this time, there was no doubt mum had undercurrents of difficult things to process, after the unthinkable tragedy of losing a child – however, her spark of wit and humour was always just under the surface and often sparkled forth.

One of my fondest earliest memories is dancing with my mum to records; we used to bounce around! Certain songs just take me back... “Jump” by The Pointer Sisters – I remember the album cover – three beautiful women in smoky eyeshadow with ripped tops, classic 80s look! Also, ABBA’s “Super Trooper”. From the age of 5, I knew what a super trooper was; a spotlight that shines on the stage! I always had a sense of how happy it made my mum to dance with me to these songs – there was a sense of something joyful and freeing that was awakened by her connection to music.



Andrew with his mum

# *My musical journey started when I was 8*

Although neither of my parents were professional musicians per se, my dad definitely appreciated music. As a teenager he'd spend his pocket money on records, including well-known classical works like Holst's The Planets Suite. One day he went to Woolworths and bought Bernstein's West Side Story – his mother thought it was so awful, discordant and modern – she made him take it back. It was hardly hardcore heavy metal!

My mum's side of the family were amateur musicians. My mum and her siblings were given piano lessons (although none had taken it too seriously) and my grandfather, aunt and uncle were members of the local parish church choir.

My own musical journey started when I was 8. My uncle was getting rid of a piano and offered it to my mum who asked if I'd like piano lessons. I was keen and had lessons with a lovely local teacher called Mrs Knight. She was in her 60s, though to me she seemed about 200!

She was really sweet, gentle and quiet and I remember she had a beautiful golden retriever. It took me about 6 months to really click with the piano but when I did, you couldn't get me away from it! I really loved playing and was progressing quicker than fellow classmates who were having lessons. I was crap at football and sport – where you'd usually gain "street cred" but I was pretty good at learning pieces and was given the opportunity to play them in front of the whole class by our class teacher. I think the first song I played was Annie's Song by John Denver – another record mum and I used to listen and swirl around to.

At primary school I sang in the choir. Looking back we were lucky that there were three musically minded teachers that accompanied us on piano, guitar and drums and worked hard to put together a Christmas and Summer concert every year. I would know all the songs really well and sing my little heart out. In one of the concerts a woman said to my mum, "I couldn't keep my eyes off your son – he looked so alive and happy as he sang".



# *Being a countertenor was in the waters and breath of the school*

My parents had both gone to a secondary modern school, as they had both “failed” the 11 plus exam. Despite both being really clever people with a deep interest in the world around them, this one moment in time ended up defining their educational path. They left school at 16 and by a twist of fate both ended up working at Lloyds Bank. In their 20s they met when they were both posted to branches in the City of London. Mum stopped working when my brother was born but dad was a Senior Manager by the time he retired in the early 2000s.

Having not had excellent educations, they were determined to give my siblings and I the best secondary school education they could. I went to Trinity School in Croydon which had a very good reputation for music. Not only was it very exciting for me to arrive and have the opportunity to play whatever instrument I wanted to but I also got to take part in my first professional gig at the age of 10, when I found myself singing in the school choir at the Barbican Centre with the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

This was the world I suddenly found myself in. Boys older than me knew how to sing at a professional standard so I just joined in with them. With the older boys singing at that level, it really pulled me up quickly!

I started playing the violin but didn't gel with it – I don't think my family enjoyed it either! At 13 I fell in love with the sound of the oboe and that became another passion of mine. It's something I've come back to now I've stopped singing.

After my voice broke, I sang countertenor in the school choir. The upper soprano part of the choir was sung by unbroken voices, two lowest parts by the tenors and basses which left the part just below the soprano to be sung by countertenors. At Trinity this really was not unusual – and the school has produced many professional countertenors.

The boys' choir was (and still is) well regarded for its performances of the roles of the Fairies in Benjamin Britten's operatic setting of “A Midsummer Night's Dream”. The work was written in the 1960s for the Aldeburgh Festival and has one of the first “modern” uses of the countertenor in the role of Oberon, first performed by Alfred Deller.

Britten effectively uses the otherworldliness of the voice to convey the slightly sinister (and erotic) elements of the character. Deller was long dead by the time I was singing with the choir but we were often shown the video of a 1981 Glyndebourne production, in which the role of Oberon was sung by the wonderful countertenor James Bowman. You see, countertenors were everywhere! When you are exposed to the voice type on a pretty much daily basis, it doesn't seem weird, strange or feminine at all!

Looking back, I thought I'd be a classroom music teacher but I remember a piano teacher at school whom I was playing a really complicated duet with, turning around to me and saying, “You pick up things so quickly. I really think if you wanted to become a musician, you stand a really good chance”.

# *You just had to make it happen in sometimes less than ideal situations and scenarios*

My academic music teacher at school who must have been 22 (as he'd just graduated from Oxford) said, "You're applying to Cambridge to study music academically. As you sing, why don't you go for a choral scholarship".

Clare College always had a reputation as the Cambridge college, where lots of great musicians had studied. It has an excellent chapel choir and was the obvious place to apply. It also has some exceptionally beautiful buildings on the Backs by the River Cam. When I auditioned for my choral scholarship trials, Tim Brown (the director of music) seemed excited about my singing and I was offered a choral scholarship.

Before I had even matriculated, I was asked to join the choir for a tour across Bulgaria and Macedonia, as the choir needed a few extra voices. This was in 1997, when both countries were not long out of their respective socialist regimes. It was not like your average holiday to Spain! It was quite fruity! We sang in Sofia, Skopje and around Lake Ohrid. It was very much "Eastern Europe" at the time – an eye opener for an 18-year-old. I also met two dear friends who like me, were singing with the choir before they had even started their courses. They are still some of my very best friends today – and I'm godfather to two of their children.

At Clare, the choir's main raison d'être was singing the three chapel services every week during term time. This is where we all learnt the nuts and bolts of singing in a choir at the highest professional level. Cambridge University terms are quite short (at just eight weeks) so we had long vacations in which we'd also perform in concerts and tour internationally once or twice a year. We also would make at least one CD a year, including Purcell's Dido and Aeneas with Rene Jacobs (whom I got to work with again later in my career as a soloist) and a Gramophone award nominated recording called "Illumina".

I vividly recall a long tour to North America. We started the tour staying in Texas with friends of Tim Brown. We had a glorious first week, lounging around by pools – then the tour properly started! In 28 days, we did something like 30 concerts. The schedule involved flying to a venue, staying with guests, doing the concert, going to bed, getting another flight or coach to go somewhere else – on repeat! I was 20 and of course wanted to have fun but had to be sensible because we all had a job to do. This experience really taught me about touring – you just have to "pull it out of the bag", even if you have a splitting headache, are tired or are feeling sick. It was a training to foster your work ethic – you just had to make it happen in sometimes less than ideal situations and scenarios.

## *A real deep dive!*

Before finishing at Clare in 2000, I spoke to my singing teacher David Lowe and said that I thought I would quite like to sing professionally. He was very encouraging so I took the plunge and auditioned at several London music colleges. I was offered an entrance scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music starting in 2001. It was a real deep dive! I thought I had a good idea of how to sing but I pretty much had to go right back to the beginning. The standard of singing at Clare was excellent but being at the Academy was like being told, "here's another 20 levels you need to master!". In addition to reworking my singing technique, there were language classes and coaching, learning about stage craft and acting, as well as studying vast quantities of repertoire.

# NOELLE BARKER, OBE: A LEGACY OF VOCAL EXCELLENCE AND EDUCATIONAL MASTERY IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Noelle Barker, OBE, was an influential figure in the world of classical music, both as a distinguished English soprano and a revered singing teacher. Born on 28th December 1928, Noelle's career spanned several decades, during which she made significant contributions to both performance and pedagogy. Her talent as a soprano was widely recognised and she graced numerous stages with her powerful and emotive voice, earning accolades and respect within the classical music community.

However, it was perhaps her role as an educator at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama that truly solidified her legacy. Over her long tenure, Noelle became known for her exceptional teaching skills, guiding and nurturing the talents of countless students. Her ability to impart technical skills and artistic expression, helped shape the careers of many successful singers, including the renowned soprano Sophie Karthäuser. Noelle's dedication to her students and her passion for teaching were evident in the successes they achieved under her mentorship.

Noelle's impact on the world of classical music extends beyond her own performances and the achievements of her students. She embodied the spirit of dedication to the arts and her contributions to vocal pedagogy have left a lasting imprint on the field. Her legacy is remembered with great respect and admiration, as she not only enriched the lives of her students but also profoundly influenced the broader classical music community. Noelle's life and work continue to inspire future generations of musicians and educators alike.



# *It would be just you, her and the grand piano*

For the first 2 years at the Academy, I was on the classical singing course but then won another scholarship to the opera course. From my second year, I had lessons with Noelle Barker who was the most incredible woman. I was 22 and she was exactly 50 years older than me but she had the energy of a 20-year-old. She was elegant, erudite, extremely well educated, dynamic yet holistic in the very best sense of the word.

Noelle had been Head of the Guildhall School of Music vocal faculty in its heyday in the 70s and 80s. Huge names in the classical vocal industry were studying there when she was head including Bryn Terfel, Anne Sophie Von Otter, Rebecca Evans, Patricia Rosario, Sue Bickley and Alice Coote.

In addition to having an amazing ear and ability to teach technique, Noelle was holistic in her approach to teaching. She created fully rounded musical artists.

She lived in a beautiful house on the south side of Hampstead Heath. There was a studio at the bottom of the garden. She'd close the doors, pull the net curtains behind you and it would be just you, her and the grand piano.

Noelle gave me a deep education about what it was to be an artist. When you arrived there would be books, programmes and leaflets on the lid of the piano. She'd ask, "Have you seen this art exhibition?" and "Have you read this book, you need to know more about Goethe!" or "Here's a history book about what was happening in Georgian London, around the time your Handel opera was written!". Noelle also gave helpful, practical (and extensive!) advice such as what to wear and how to present yourself in auditions.

Those 90 minutes each week with her were the happiest musical times of my life. It was quite an uphill cycle from the Academy to Noelle's but it certainly got the lungs working ready for the lesson! I know it's a false memory but I seem to remember the sun always shining after leaving lessons. After, I would free wheel away down the hill back to the Academy, delighted I'd had another inspirational experience and ready to get down to serious work in the practice room.



Noelle and her grand piano

# *Artistic bath*

I also was lucky enough to take part in an ERASMUS exchange to the Paris Conservatoire (CNSMDP) at Noelle's insistence which was a magical 4 months. The opera course at the RAM were putting on a production where there wouldn't be a role for a countertenor so I was strongly encouraged to make the most of the opportunity.

It was fascinating to see how different the musical educational system was in France. The French seem to treat their artists differently to the English. Art, whether that is literature, music, theatre or dance seem (to me) to be integral to the French culture. Art so embedded in who the French are and how they see themselves and the word elite doesn't seem to be the dirty word it is in the UK. All the concerts, museums and galleries I went to would be crammed full.

I pretty much went to every museum in Paris and as many concerts as I could. It was an artistic bath. I have such fond memories of Paris.

Pierre Mervant, my teacher at the Conservatoire, had lessons with Noelle. She was very highly regarded and had given many masterclasses at the CNSMDP.

As all the lessons were in French, I had to resurrect my school boy French rather quickly! Pierre and I would laugh a lot about my mistranslations and butchery of the beautiful language. He'd say, "Regarde-toi dans la glace" [Look at yourself in the mirror] but I thought to myself, why is he talking about ice cream? – so I replied, "Tu veux que je t'achete une glace" [Do you want me to get you an ice cream?].

He'd also liberally pepper his sentences with the slang adverb "vachement" [really]. For about a month I thought he was telling me I sounded like a cow!

At the song class presentations, we had to introduce what we were performing to the other students. I caused much hilarity, when I introduced the Debussy song I was to sing not as "Colloque Sentimental" [Sentimental Conversation] but "Collique Sentimental" [Sentimental diarrhoea].



Noelle teaching at Britten Pears Arts, 1979  
Photo by Nigel Luckhurst  
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Thank you, Dr. Christopher Hilton

We extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Christopher Hilton, Head of Archive and Library at Britten Pears Arts, for his invaluable assistance in locating the rare 1979 photograph of Noelle Barker. Your dedication to preserving the arts and your support in making this iconic image available for our feature in Niroshini Mini Magazine is truly appreciated. Your efforts not only honour the legacy of Noelle but also enrich our readers' experience. Thank you for helping us bring history to life.



Inside The Red House  
Photo by Philip Vile  
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The Red House Aldeburgh in the snow 2018  
Copyright, Britten Pears Foundation  
This is where Noelle's photo from 1979 was found

# *The country is going to be poorer artistically and financially*

Being in Paris really made me aware of the comparatively lower level of funding given to arts education in this country. A situation that has only gotten worse and worse since 2004!

Croydon Council in the early 90s had an excellent council led music system. There was a youth orchestra, wind orchestra, jazz band, percussion studio and uniquely (in the country) a Saturday morning piano school called the Croydon Schools Piano Centre.

Gathering together young, gifted pianists from all walks of life and from all across the borough, each Saturday we would be given an hour-long lesson with a top-notch piano teacher, as well as a general musicianship class. This was all heavily subsidised by the council.

This opportunity lifted my piano playing as the standard was incredibly high. There were lots of performing opportunities available, including a yearly lunchtime concert at the Fairfield Hall in front of a huge audience. Over the years I played works for piano duet, two pianos or solo items such as Chopin's A-Major Military Polonaise.

In my final year at the Centre, I was lucky enough to play the Poulenc Sextet with the principals of the London Mozart Players. It really was a "wow experience" that has stayed with me my whole life. I got to work with incredible musicians who treated a young 18-year-old as a fellow professional musician. This and the many other experiences I've mentioned, made it feel like this profession could be an option for me.

It makes me angry that a lot of kids nowadays are not having these opportunities. Arts education is always the first thing to get cut! Not that it should matter, as the arts are about reflecting who we are as human beings – but the financial rewards for society are huge; what the government puts in in subsidy, they get back three or four times. The arts in this country punch massively above their weight. Our orchestras, ballet and opera companies, theatre companies are truly "world beating" (to use an awful phrase from the last government). Why you would not foster this I simply don't understand. For example, the music industry for computer games and films are massive at the moment. If you're not training people up, there will be no-one to take these jobs and the country is going to be poorer artistically and financially.

Classical music really isn't difficult or elitist. If things are presented in the right way to kids, they will naturally be curious. At my state primary school, I vividly remember 3 visiting groups. There was a theatre company that performed the argument scene between the 4 lovers from A Midsummer Night. The bunch of 8, 9 and 10 year olds found it hilarious. There was also a wind quintet and a brass quartet that visited. I remember the trumpeter in the brass quartet playing the Coronation Street theme tune. I was 6 and it's ingrained in my memory. I certainly don't remember what I learnt in maths that day!

We really do need music, drama and creative arts in the curriculum. They aren't difficult or elitist subjects – it's simply about getting this stuff in front of kids – it's not a difficult thing and it's not expensive. Yes, business and science are important too but we haven't been put on this earth just to create wealth and money for the government. We are also here to learn about why we are here and what it truly is to be human; to laugh, to cry, to love, to hate, to hear, to sing, to dance, to act, to paint etc.

# *Tapping into something bigger*

Since I've stopped performing, I've thought a lot about what it was that was so important to me about it. I remember a famous director saying to me that they thought the only reason people got up on stage, was to work out their childhood trauma. Whilst there might be a tiny bit of truth in this assertion, for me performing was always about tapping into something bigger – expressing something bigger, more mysterious and more universal than words alone can express.

Music is universal to the human experience, no matter where you come from. If you don't understand the music or even the language from another culture, something still touches you. I've been as moved by Tibetan chanting or Aboriginal Indigenous music as I have by a Mozart aria. It's all about the rhythms and cycles. There's something about patterns of rhythm and pitch that the human mind responds to. It's those same patterns and cycles that drew me to craniosacral therapy.

# *The rise of the countertenor outside cathedrals*

Alfred Deller (whom I mentioned before, whom Noelle sang with when she was a young soprano!) was the first “modern” countertenor. In the 1950s he was quite a trailblazer, performing standard repertory works such as Handel’s *Messiah*, when the voice traditionally singing the alto solos would have been a matronly contralto.

Following a very literal interpretation of a passage in Corinthians in the Bible – “Women should keep silence in church” – until quite recently, music sung in the Christian church had been the exclusive preserve of men. The upper part of the choir had been sung by boys but in late 17th and 18th century Italy, it was not uncommon to find young, talented boys subjected to the abhorrent practice of castration, to preserve the purity of their vocal talents in an adult male body.

These unfortunate men would go through many of the normal physiological changes of adulthood but wouldn’t go through puberty. They were then enrolled in conservatoires and drilled in vocal and musical education for several years. Due to the imbalance of hormones, they grew very tall and barrel chested and had an unusually large breath capacity. The “lucky” ones had huge careers singing in opera houses around Europe, commanding high fees and having music written for them by the best composers of the age. They were the rock stars of their age!

The practice of castration thankfully no longer happens but the music from this period has had a massive resurgence over the last 60 years. In the 50s and 60s there began to be an interest in reviving music of the baroque period, performing it in the same way and on instruments that the composer would have recognised. For example, a violin would be used from the 18th century, as now we have metal strings but in the 18th century they’d use gut strings which has a very different sound. Metal has a more brilliant sound and gut a warmer, mellow sound. In the 18th century the heel was more weighted than the tip of the violin so there’s a great difference in the way it sounded. When instruments from the medieval period are used, a new sound world opens up.

Nowadays castrati roles are sung by countertenors – men singing in falsetto (think of an operatic Bee-Gee!) or by women. These roles are not easy – they push modern singers to the edge of their ability, in terms of breath control and agility.

# *Snape Maltings*

Whilst I was a student at the Academy, I took part in a course at Britten Pears: the Young Artist Programme at Snape Maltings. The weeks rehearsals led to a performance at Snape of Handel's "Dixit Dominus". The course was truly international and we had excellent guidance from Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Richard Egarr.

Snape is such a magical place. The Maltings themselves and oh, those stunning reed beds. The legacy of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears is in the air.

There is a unique quality of "space" in Suffolk. It's so physically different from elsewhere in the country and it was a place where I was able to pause, take a deep breath and reflect where I was at in my singing career.

I went back in 2014, where I performed in a Handel opera with English Touring Opera. I thought to myself, it can't be as beautiful as I remember but it was even more so. There's something in Suffolk that reminds me of why we've chosen to live in Wiltshire. There's something magical in the earth; it's very still and grounded and you sense being part of something so much bigger. There are so few places in the UK, where you get that sense of "big sky country": you feel your body opening and widening in response to the nature and landscape in front of you. Blissful!



Snape Maltings Concert Hall from across the River Alde  
Copyright Philip Vile



Concert Hall Snape Maltings  
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Snape Maltings  
Copyright Britten Pears Arts

# *The most challenging role I sang was in 2010, at the Royal Danish Opera House in Copenhagen*

The most challenging role I sang was in 2010, at the Royal Danish Opera House in Copenhagen. At the time I was performing there, the opera house was virtually brand new – only 5 or 6 years old. It's in quite an amazing location, built on the water on the opposite bank from the main part of the city. Most people get a boat across the water when they go to a show. I performed in many "jewel box" theatres in Italy but Operaen is exquisite, with its beautiful glass frontage and a chestnut wood interior.

I was performing Hamor in Handel's oratorio "Jephtha". Although Handel wrote 40 or so operas, towards the end of his career, he concentrated on setting biblical stories which were performed in Lent when the theatres were shut. Although they were pieces intended to be sung in concert presentation, they are so dramatic that they are often now staged. The story concerns the Israelite leader Jephtha, who goes to war and makes a vow to God, that he'll sacrifice the first thing he sees on his return if he wins. Of course, he wins and the first thing he sees on his return is his daughter. Much of the latter part of the piece is his struggle to keep his vow to God. In Handel's setting just as his daughter is to be sacrificed, she is rescued by an angel.

The production was directed by Katie Mitchell, an English theatre director who has a very particular style; realism, intensity of emotion and creating a very distinctive world on stage.

The piece was set in a 1940's bombed out hotel. It was an amazing set, with a plethora of realistic props and evocative period costumes. A lot of opera productions aren't so interested in this realism – the dramatic aspect of the piece takes second place to the music and the vocalism. In this production however, I had my first taste of hyper-realism; just existing on the set as if you were in a normal room. I knew my character's back story; where I was born, brought up, what had brought Hamor to this exact moment in time.

The whole process pushed my acting to a completely different level. The rehearsals were really draining, as it was an intense story and we watched quite a lot of bleak videos, to help us really get a sense of what a horrific thing an execution really is.

Katie demanded precise, accurate work but was always very encouraging. This experience really opened my eyes to a whole level of being an "actor singer", rather than just a singer who was acting. It didn't matter that you had to sing long phrases or keep in time with the orchestra, the acting had to be detailed and believable.

There was a moment in rehearsals where the story really touched on something very deep inside me, that I hadn't known was there before. We were working on the moment leading up to the sacrifice. I was playing the soprano's love interest / fiancé. It was being acted in such a realistic way – really physical with high emotions flying everywhere. At the moment I was ripped away from her for the last time and thrown across the stage, something in me surged up and I burst uncontrollably into tears of unconsolable grief for about 5 minutes. It had evidently touched something in me that I didn't know was there. It wasn't until a few years later, when I started training as a Craniosacral Therapist, that I met this place again.

Unusually for a non-standard work, the Opera House had scheduled 10 shows. The power of the piece was undeniable – the audience loved it, as did the soloists, chorus and orchestra. There are rare moments when you perform that the stars align and you become aware everyone in the space is present in that precise moment together: something has happened, something is being channelled through you and the space and people in it have been changed in some way.

This production became a benchmark for future projects and I found myself getting quite frustrated when there wasn't that same level of truth demanded by later directors I worked with. Even now, if I go to see a performance (of any kind) and there's not that sense of visceral truth being lived on stage, I feel short changed.



Andrew performing Hamor in Handel's oratorio "Jephtha", 2010  
Photo: The Royal Danish Theatre/Thomas Petri



Andrew performing Hamor in Handel's oratorio "Jephtha", 2010  
Photo: The Royal Danish Theatre/Thomas Petri



Opera, evening

Photo: The Royal Danish Theatre/Copyright Lars Schmidt



Opera, foyer

Photo: The Royal Danish Theatre/Copyright Lars Schmidt



Opera, evening

Photo: The Royal Danish Theatre/Copyright Thomas Nørdam Andersen

# *Conversazioni I released on Avie Records*

I'm good friends with Julian Perkins; we went to both Cambridge and the Royal Academy. Julian (who is now the artistic director of The Portland Baroque Orchestra) has always been somewhat of an entrepreneur and he said one day, "why don't we do an album together as I've had a great idea...?".

Italy in the early 18th century must have been an amazing place to be. Musically at that time, all roads really did lead to Rome! Rich cardinals were huge patrons of the arts and used to throw intellectual gatherings (called *Conversazioni*) at which newly written music was performed. The great, good and famous would be there. Although there is no documentation of what was performed there, we know which composers were employed by one of the important patrons, Cardinal Ottoboni. We put together a programme of works that might have been performed at one of those events.

You are always changing artistically and the album is a snapshot of how I was singing at that stage in my career. There's some really wonderful, rarely performed music on it. It was such a fun experience to make a record with friends – so much fun, that we actually made a second one – *Conversazioni II*!



# CONVERSAZIONI 1

*Cantatas  
from a  
Cardinal's Court*

SOUNDS BAROQUE

*Andrew Radley, countertenor  
Julian Perkins, director*



# CONVERSAZIONI II

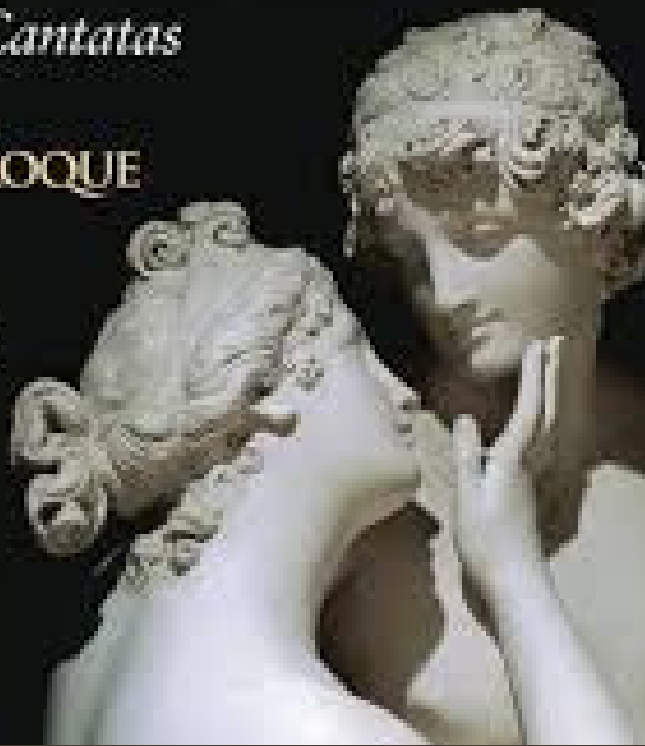
*Duelling Cantatas*

SOUNDS BAROQUE

*Anna Dennis  
soprano*

*Andrew Radley  
countertenor*

*Julian Perkins  
director*



# *Proms*

No matter how many times you walk out on stage at the Royal Albert Hall, you can't believe how small you feel in that space – it's enormous. It's the largest classical space in the country seating over 5000. There's all that performance history and sense of occasion in the woodwork, as the Proms is a really special festival. Acoustically it's not ideal, partly because it's so big but the audience are so keen (and knowledgeable!) that it really does make you raise your game!



Handel's Poro  
Göttingen Handel Festival 2006



# ANDREW KOVAL- RADLEY

JONATHAN DOVE - FLIGHT 2008  
ROLE: REFUGEE  
PICTURE CREDIT - ANDREW  
FINDEN

[MIDDLE RIGHT] HANDEL'S  
OTTONE - ENGLISH TOURING  
OPERA 2014  
ROLE: ADELBERTO  
PICTURED WITH LOUISE  
KEMENY - TEOFANE

[BOTTOM RIGHT] SCOTTISH  
OPERA PRODUCTION, HANDEL'S  
RODELINDA IN 2013  
ROLE: BERTARIDO

[LEFT] HANDEL'S ORLANDO,  
SCOTTISH OPERA  
ROLE: MEDORO  
PICTURED WITH CLAIRE BOOTH -  
DORINDA

# *Something beyond words*

Singing taught me a lot about myself and I do look back and wonder what was it that called me to that career. I've realised that in addition to the beautiful music I got to perform, deep connection and communication (both verbal and non-verbal) are really important to me.

Music was (and still is) a way to connect on so many levels. Firstly, with myself, what I'm feeling and who I am. Secondly, it was also an opportunity to connect with a historical figure (admittedly mostly dead white men!).

As I learnt and performed music, I'd be thinking about what was going on in the composer's mind. You are given a window to another human being in time who felt and reacted to the challenges and joys of life in a similar way to you and I.

Thirdly it's a chance to engage with the audience in front of you and connect to something much bigger; something beyond words.

# *In life I believe you are allocated certain special people*

In life I believe you are allocated certain special people and Noelle was certainly one of mine. I'd been at the Academy for a year and searching for a new singing teacher and mentor. I remember her opening her front door and when I saw her for the first time, I thought, "I've found you". I think it was a mutual understanding.

We got on like a house on fire and I continued learning with her at least 3 or 4 years after I left the Academy. Even after she gently pushed me out of the nest, we stayed regularly in contact and she'd often come to concerts in which I was performing, to check in with how I was singing and what I was wearing!

After Noelle died, I helped her lovely daughter Belinda to organise some of Noelle's musical effects. Noelle had premiered hundreds of compositions in her career so we made certain those scores were given to the Academy Library. It was also an opportunity to be in that magical studio one last time and take the opportunity to thank her for all she had done for me.

Belinda asked if there was anything I'd like to remember her mother by. I chose a picture that had hung in her kitchen which I had often admired when waiting for my lessons. It's an amazing abstract piece; very textural, with beautiful hues of greens and greys – I'd always loved it, even though I don't know who the artist is. It's one of my most prized possessions. When I look at it, I always feel calm and can sense Noelle is still with me.

Noelle is also the link to my new career path in craniosacral therapy (CST). She was so ahead of the game in many respects and had been having CST and other alternative treatments for a long time before I met her. She had breast cancer twice and found that she could manage the aftereffects of her treatment on her body through regular sessions. I think it might also be why she was so full of energy!

I went for my first CST session at Noelle's insistence, as my voice had suddenly closed down and I couldn't take a proper full breath. I had been working with a particularly difficult conductor who was pushing on a lot of personal triggers. My voice which was now a quarter of its normal size, didn't want to express what my brain was telling it to do.

This had never happened before and was quite frightening, as I had some important work coming up. Noelle knew it wasn't purely a physical thing and that there was some emotional or psychological block at play so she sent me to Sylvie Leboulanger, her cranial osteopath.

Sylvie is such an incredible person; warm, friendly, wise and touched by several angels! At my first session I didn't really know what to expect but Sylvie got me on the couch, placed her hands gently on me and within 10 minutes I was crying. She hadn't asked me what was going on and wasn't saying anything but my body was releasing and processing. Sylvie then said, "You've been in a really bullying environment", I said, "How did you know?".

I felt truly seen and heard at both a physical, emotional and psychological level; something I'd never felt in other therapies. I had a sense of being deeply in touch with every cell of my body and a sense of being able to let go, as I was being held not only by Sylvie but by something even bigger. My voice came back again and I was hooked! Over my singing career Sylvie helped me with physical ailments like coughs and colds but also rebalancing my nervous system after particularly busy or challenging periods of work. I didn't really understand what she was doing but I had an inkling that at some point, I would want to know more about how this magic was created.

Looking back, I had been performing professionally in some way or another since I was 10 which was quite a long career already. Noelle had always impressed on me from our first lesson that "when singing becomes just a job, you need to get out". In 2015, I found myself at a natural crossroad and reflecting on what Noelle had said. I realised that singing had now become just a job; I wasn't enjoying it as much as I used to and was finding the endless time away from family and friends really challenging. I decided to take a break and enrolled on a massage course to check whether bodywork might be for me. By the end of the first day, I knew I had found something exciting. I really enjoyed the new set of skills that allowed me to connect with others in a different way and that involved diving into the wonderful world of physiology and anatomy. I still am a bit of an anatomy geek – our bodies are such incredible things.



Noelle's painting



Noelle in her 30s





Noelle in her 70s

# *Dear Human: you've got it all wrong*

On my CST training I came up hard and fast against the most challenging parts of myself. I think it's an absolute truth that you can't hold space for other people in a really effective way, unless you've looked at stuff and processed the difficult parts of yourself first.

As Bessel Van Der Kolk's wonderful book states, "The Body Keeps the Score". We all carry our histories like a living autobiography but a lot of "my stuff" was preverbal and my nervous system was pretty charged. Preverbal stuff is difficult to process in talk therapy as it's just sensations e.g. feelings of anxiety, sadness or foreboding that don't have any obvious story but feel very real. Given my history it wasn't really a surprise. I was a young baby whose mother was processing arguably the most painful grief a human can feel. Her daughter had just died and she still had to look after a year-old baby. Babies are so attuned to their primary caregiver, as they can only regulate their nervous systems through the adults around them. I was not neglected in any way shape or form but I began to find that I had internalised a lot of the grief and sadness that was around me.

When I had that crying fit in the Copenhagen rehearsal room, I realised I had been leaning into this deep sense of loss. It was all centred physically around my heart and ribcage and there was a lack of freedom and mobility in this area.

Six months into my training I hit a brick wall which was really unpleasant. I dropped into the full sense of my preverbal world – the universe felt dark, bleak, lifeless but I was anxious and had no energy at the same time. I remember walking through the doors of the CST school to the seminar and I started crying. I didn't stop for 4 days and I simply couldn't turn it off. I was desperately sad but there was nothing immediately in my life to be sad about.

I knew I had to go inwards and drop into this dark place which was really scary. I saw Sylvie the day after the seminar finished. I walked into her room, having still not stopped crying and was able to drop deeply into the pain my mother and father felt when my sister died and that I had internalised.

I'd never made a sound like it before, I howled the place down but although it was hard, it wasn't scary. I was held by Sylvie and through her connected to something much bigger. The sadness lifted and my heart and ribs freed up.

CST links you back with the innate wisdom of the body and (I would argue) the wisdom of the universe that put you right here, right now. As CST practitioner's, we learn to listen to the physical manifestations of this wisdom which is always present. It will tell you exactly what you need to do in a session. Some therapies bypass this wisdom of the body but given we're here in this fleshy container we might as well listen to it!

I really love my work. It feels like a continuation of my musical career in so far it's all about connection, communication and expressing who we are as human beings. Having been through the challenge of finding a deep sense of safety in my own body, I'm well equipped to help others through this process. Since graduating in 2017, I've added other things to my tool kit including Breathwork, Compassionate Inquiry and most recently Co-Active Coaching. My desire is to help each of my clients remember that they are already perfect and from that foundation of safety and calm, begin to process the challenges they may be facing at a physical, emotional or psychological level. It reminds me of a quote:

Dear Human: You've got it all wrong

You didn't come here to master unconditional love. That is where you came from and where you'll return. You came here to learn personal love. Universal love. Messy love. Sweaty love. Crazy love. Broken love. Whole love. Infused with divinity. Lived through the grace of stumbling. Demonstrated through the beauty of... messing up. Often. You didn't come here to be perfect. You already are. You came here to be gorgeously human. Flawed and fabulous. And then to rise again into remembering. ~ Courtney A. Walsh

## *Favourite Quote*

The music is not in the notes but in the  
silence between ~ Wolfgang Amadeus  
Mozart

I think it's true. It's in the spaces, silences,  
gaps, in the transitions – that's when we  
have the chance to connect with  
something bigger. Like the Buddhist  
teaching says, "in the gap, you learn who  
you are and what is your true nature".

## *Note from founder of Niroshini Mini Magazine, Melissa Day...*

In my interview with Andrew Koval-Radley, I was deeply moved by how his life seamlessly intertwines compassion with a profound love for the arts.

Andrew's extraordinary talent has enchanted audiences around the globe. He brought to life roles by composers such as George Frideric Handel, with standout performances in "Giulio Cesare" and "Jephtha". His critically acclaimed solo CD, "Conversazioni 1", further showcased his remarkable artistry and versatility.

Central to Andrew's development was his relationship with Noelle Barker, a distinguished soprano and teacher. Their special connection profoundly influenced his vocal technique and artistic approach, instilling a commitment to musical excellence. Andrew's dedication to his craft and the nurturing guidance from Noelle helped him hone a unique and captivating vocal presence that left lasting impressions on audiences and critics alike.

While Andrew achieved great success in the operatic world, his compassionate nature drew him towards a new path. Transitioning to craniosacral therapy, he embraced the wisdom of the body. Andrew's approach emphasises listening to the body's messages and creating a safe space for healing. He is passionate about helping people hear these messages and feel secure in their own bodies, reflecting his empathetic and caring nature. A line from the quote above, "We didn't come here to be perfect. We already are. We came here to be gorgeously human. Flawed and fabulous" – encapsulates Andrew's belief in embracing our inherent worth and humanity.

During our conversation, it became clear that Andrew's deep dive into his own healing journey, equips him uniquely to help others. His understanding of personal and holistic health is profound, making him someone who can truly facilitate healing in many.

Andrew is also a strong advocate for arts and education, believing that more should be done to provide access to the arts in this country, recognising its importance in fostering creativity and emotional growth.

Andrew's life's work, from captivating performances to healing touch, serves as an inspiring reminder that pursuing diverse interests can lead to a rich and impactful life.

# The Serenity Suit



Discover inner peace and  
radiant living with The  
Serenity Suit: your guide to  
mental health, well-being  
and holistic beauty.

# *Nourished through our wounds*

"The Joyous Body" by Clarissa Pinkola Estés presents a profound exploration of resilience and healing, drawing wisdom from nature, particularly from the bristlecone pines. These ancient trees which thrive in seemingly impossible conditions, become metaphors for human endurance and growth through adversity.

On the harsh, stark mountains, past the timberline, these trees older than Christ, seem to defy logic. They grow close to the ground, hugging the granite rock, appearing like bushes to the untrained eye. Despite their challenging environment, these trees have survived for thousands of years, enduring brutal elements and thriving in the most unrelenting conditions. This incredible adaptation is not just a testament to their physical resilience but also to an unyielding life force within them which Estés refers to as the spirit in the psyche.

Estés draws a parallel between the trees' adaptation and human experiences of overcoming emotional and physical challenges. Just as the trees stretch across the rock instead of reaching for the sky, humans can grow and thrive even when bedridden by life's difficulties. The trees' ability to balance on precarious canyons in harsh conditions, symbolises the human spirit's capacity to adapt and find strength in the most remarkable circumstances.

The author emphasises the importance of listening to our bodies and nurturing them as our "beautiful companion and consort". By doing so we can expand in knowledge and wisdom, just as the bristlecone pines have adapted to withstand all that comes their way. However, this growth is hindered if we do not address and heal our psychological imprints or samskaras which can block our life force or shakti.

In Indian philosophy, samskaras are deep-seated impressions or recollections that impact our energetic body. Author Michael J Singer, likens these to the residual images on old TV screens, where previous imprints remain visible even after changing channels. These energetic imprints, often stemming from past traumas, can block our energy wheels or chakras, impeding our growth and healing.

Life's triggers, such as feelings of abandonment, may resurface even when we believe we have healed. This does not signify a regression in our healing journey but an expansion of consciousness. Each recurrence offers an opportunity to deepen our understanding and fully release the samskara. Our emotional body seeks healing, attracting situations that allow us to integrate and transform negative experiences into positive growth.

Healing is a continuous process, essential for the expansion of consciousness. There is no endpoint to healing; it is a journey of learning and sharing experiences. Our connection to the source or the world around us, remains unbroken. Through our relationships and interactions with the environment, we learn and grow, recognising life itself as our teacher.

Estés marvels at the bristlecone pines' beauty, etched with scars from the relentless environment. These scars, like inky black tattoos, reflect their survival stories. She questions societal standards that equate unmarked bodies with beauty, emphasising that every creature that dares to live bears scars of their journey. These marks are symbols of resilience and survival.

The symbiotic relationship between the trees and the insects that burrow into their roots, illustrates the importance of allowing relationships to form for healing. The insects' bites remove the hardened skin of the roots, enabling water to nourish the tree deeply. This relationship mirrors the human need to connect with others and our environment to heal our deepest wounds.

In conclusion, Estés' "The Joyous Body" encourages us to acknowledge our wounds and nourish them with awareness. By embracing our scars and releasing samskaras, we can expand our consciousness and grow. The bristlecone pines teach us that resilience and adaptation are possible even in the harshest conditions. Through connection and understanding, we can heal and thrive, wearing our physical and emotional scars with pride.

If you need support on your healing journey, reach out to Melissa at [info@niroshini.com](mailto:info@niroshini.com)

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NIROSHINI

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