

**CONQUERING CALCIUM LOSS: A guide to healthy bones**

# NEW REALITIES

Oneness of Self, Mind, and Body

September/October 1990 \$3.50

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PROFILE



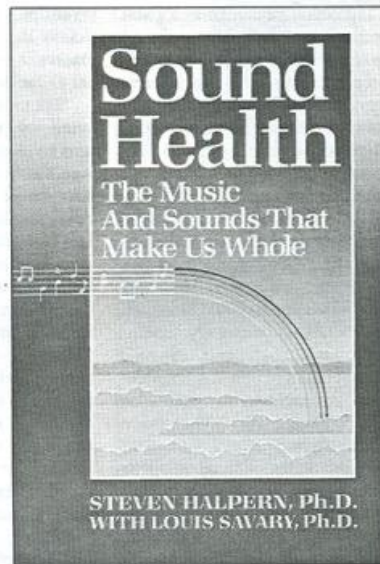
Composer and Performer  
STEVEN HALPERN

from a variety of addictions. "In a sense," he said, "their search to overcome their addictions parallels the meditative search that came through people in the sixties. These people are learning that it is important for their well-being—even necessary—to learn how to relax and how to meditate. Authentic New Age music can be a tremendous aid."

Within the total context of music, many listeners look specifically for a functional music that can bring them into a state of relaxation. "But they shouldn't play 'radio roulette,'" said Halpern. "If they are seeking true relaxation, they shouldn't be listening to classical or New Age pop stations that are not programming music specifically for relaxation. At best, statistically speaking, such listening can be marginally effective; at worst, it's dangerous."

"A writer may suggest that a sonata by Mozart is great for relaxation and healing, but when you go into the music store, you may find ten or twenty different versions of the same sonata, and that's a problem. Dr. John Diamond, author of *Your Body Doesn't Lie* (Warner, 1980), quite conclusively demonstrates that each of these different recordings has a different life-energy, a different life-force."

"The performer may be uptight; he or she might be putting out more of an ego-state, just showing off technical virtuosity. That mind-state creates an entirely different effect for the listener than a per-



Twentieth-century Renaissance man Steven Halpern and the fruits of his vision—words and music to relax by. A sampling (shown here and right) of Halpern's literary and musical successes.

former who is putting out the vibrations of love. There we have it—the same composer, the same piece of music, but vastly different effects.”

Halpern emphasized that it is clearly not enough to simply recommend this or that piece of music, classical or otherwise. “The crucial factors are who does it, how it’s recorded and what kind of consciousness is performing it, because, indeed, music is a carrier wave for consciousness. The composer/performer’s integrity is transferred into and through the music. When we listen, we hear not only the notes, but what comes *through* the notes. Composer, compose thyself. I keep learning new skills in business, but I also reserve a lot of time in the recording studio so I can keep myself in tune as well.”

**B**orn in Manhattan in 1947 and raised on Long Island, Halpern was acutely conscious of sounds, even as a child. Early on, he felt “surrounded by a veritable sea of noise”—the buzzing refrigerator, the endless dronings of TV newscasters, the constant barrage of traffic—all of which led him to the magical comforts of music, first as a listener, then as a trumpet player and guitarist. By the time that he graduated from high school, he was an accomplished improviser and had “the hottest jazz combo in the area.”

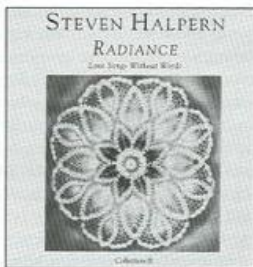
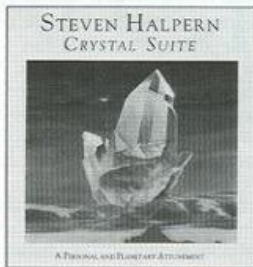
One day at the University of Buffalo, while playing “high-energy, John Coltrane-type jazz,” he experienced for the first time “the sensation of having my trumpet play itself. That is, I became the instrument of the instrument.”

With other avant-garde musicians, Halpern began exploring music, not only as an art-form, but as “a vehicle for self-transcendence. The goal was to become so proficient on one’s instrument that one’s Higher Self could come through.”

He and his friends often discussed the question of music as a spiritual resource and healing agent, but the music they actually played fell short. “It was very high-energy jazz, intensely rhythmic and emotional and cathartic. I, however, was searching for a music that would be healing and *relaxing*.”

“Pythagoras, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Gurdjieff, Hazrat Inayat Khan, and many others have written about music as a healing tool, but what music were they talking about, and where could I find it? I mean, Orpheus healed people, but he didn’t record anything. Throughout college, that question lingered in my

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mind—what *is* the music that can be used as a healing tool?

“As I thought about these matters, it became clear to me that my purpose on Earth was to seek and find and work with music that would help people reconnect with their own inner nature. I wanted to develop a music that was both functional and musical, but I didn’t know what the format might be.”

In 1969, his last year in college, Halpern conducted a series of workshops in which he experimented with a variety of musics that some people found relaxing—the slow, *alap* portions of Indian music, certain pieces by Wagner, Mozart, and Terry Riley, and selections from jazz and Asian musics.

“But it didn’t work,” said Halpern. “The Indian music sounded out of tune to most listeners, and the classical and jazz pieces either offended people or triggered too many memories. While some of the music appeared to be relaxing for

some people, it didn’t work for others. The mystery remained.”

Then, on a two-week vacation to California, Halpern sat down in a grove of redwoods to meditate while waiting for a job interview at the Bridge Mountain Foundation near Santa Cruz.

“Suddenly, I began hearing music in my head. It was not my usual jazz and blues things, but a floating, ethereal music, with no rhythm. It had sustained harmonies, overtones, long pauses between phrases, and it was beautiful and soothing and comforting. I had received an aural vision, and that vision answered all of my questions. *This* is what healing music sounds like.

“It was not a music derived from my intellectual studies. It was as if I had tapped into an on-going concert, a wave-length that was broadcasting the Music of the Spheres. I was not personally creating the music. It was more like a co-creation. I was *receiving* the music. That was my quantum leap, my peak experience.”

Halpern walked to the foundation, entered an empty room, sat down at a piano, closed his eyes, and began playing the spacious, gentle music that eventually became *Spectrum Suite*. When he opened his eyes, a dozen people were sitting and lying about the room in various stages of meditation. Halpern took the summer job, gave up his fellowship back East, left everything he owned in Buffalo, and began a new life.

Scientist John Lilly, author of *Center of the Cyclone*, and noted psychologist Dr. Stanley Krippner dropped by the foundation and listened to Halpern’s music and his views. “Well,” said Lilly, “we see people relaxing and meditating to this music, but *are* they?” Stanley Krippner agreed. “That is subjective data,” he said. “How do we *know* that what we observe is really happening? Get us some objective information. *Prove* it.”

Halpern matriculated to Sonoma State University, where he utilized biofeedback equipment, electroencephalography (EEG), Kirlian photography, and galvanic skin response (GSR) measurements to test his hypothesis. In so doing, he pioneered the rediscovery of the now-burgeoning field of psycho-acoustics—the scientific study of the psychophysiological effects of sound and music upon the human organism and the relationship of these effects to our mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.

In his studies, Halpern played a variety of musics for people. “We played my

music and jazz and classical music, including Liszt's *Liebesträume* #3, a solo piano work, which got the highest listener-agreement among music therapists and the people they worked with—Liszt's piece was regarded as relaxing, healing, soothing music."

With Kirlian photography, Halpern and his associates looked at the electro-magnetic energy fields around peoples' fingers, observing how the people responded to music.

In our double-blind studies, we found that the people who listened to Liszt categorically showed *minimal* changes in their evoked brain waves and galvanic skin responses. Essentially, they stayed in beta, which is our basic, everyday consciousness. However, when they listened to *Spectrum Suite* music for the same amount of time, five minutes, 95 percent of the people had radical changes in the direction of demonstrable relaxation. Within fifteen seconds, their brain waves moved into deeply relaxed high amplitude alpha, their right and left hemispheres balancing almost immediately.

"We had all sorts of parallels under a variety of scientifically controlled conditions. Young people, old people; different races; Asian, American, European; male, female; different body weights, fat, skinny. None of these differences mattered. All of the people showed significant, measurable changes in terms of relaxation."

Halpern learned that some people thought they were relaxed because they *liked* the music. "But," said Halpern, "that reaction does not necessarily mean the

music is truly relaxing. There may be wonderful benefits to that music, and it may be a great composition and performance. Nevertheless, that music and the music of relaxation might be two entirely different types of music altogether.

"We also had several people who *swore* they were relaxed when listening to the Liszt, when in fact they actually became more tense. One person I recall in particular, a professor, adamantly insisted that he *knew* this music intimately, and he *knew* how he reacted to it, and he *was* relaxed—when in fact he had the wrong name for the music, mistaking it for another piece, and he was tense when listening to it, definitely not relaxed. Conversely, some said, 'Well, I don't particularly like this music and I wouldn't necessarily listen to it,' but their bodies relaxed anyway."

These kinds of reactions indicated to Halpern that many people do not know a true relaxation state. "They may think bowling or watching TV is relaxing," he said, "but in fact those activities are stimulating, not relaxing. When you deal with a *meaningful* plateau of physiological and psychological relaxation, like the deep relaxation of meditation, that plateau is very different from what the general population understands.

"That's one of the great virtues of biofeedback training. You can actually see and learn what it *feels* like to be truly relaxed, to be in alpha or theta brain-wave states. And eventually you can learn how to identify what your internal states are without being hooked up to a biofeedback machine. Once you learn how to do this, you have your own built-in measuring device for a wide variety of experi-

ences, musical and otherwise—you *know* whether or not you are truly relaxed."

There are many benefits to be derived from true relaxation, Halpern noted. "Your brain is balanced and synchronized, and you learn better. If you are ill, you recuperate better. When you're dining, relaxing music helps the digestive process. Many of my Anti-Frantic Alternative recordings are often used in accelerating learning situations and in psychological and physical healing situations. The music gets you into alpha, opens the doors of the subconscious, and helps the creative process. This kind of music also works well as background for affirmations, those you speak yourself, and those which are explicitly or subliminally present in the music." ♦

© 1990 Lee Underwood. Musician and author Underwood has been writing about New Age music since the late seventies. Formerly Tim Buckley's lead guitarist, Underwood recently released his own solo guitar tape, *California Sigh*, which includes music by synthesists Steve Roach and Kevin Brabeny and pedal steel guitarist Chas Smith; it is available through most major distributors. Underwood is also co-author of flutist Paul Horn's autobiography, *Inside Paul Horn*, to be released by Harper & Row in the fall of 1990.

To receive more information about therapeutic music, Halpern invites readers to join his mailing list. For a free catalogue, write to Sound Rx, P.O. Box 1439, San Rafael, CA 94915, or telephone (415) 453-9800.

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