



Steven Halpern

Healing Humanity One Note at a Time

Steven Halpern has toiled over 40 years, crafting and honing his music. He is internationally acclaimed and is one of the “founding fathers” of New Age healing music and most recently GRAMMY®-nominated composer, recording artist and producer. His healing music has been a tool in facilitating and expanding the Shift now occurring.

WP: I'd like to begin with a bit about where you grew up and what it was like. What was the environment like? What are your memories?

SH: I grew up mostly on Rhode Island. I got there about age five and I had a family existence in the suburbs and I always kind of felt like I was a stranger in a strange land. If you had reddish blonde hair in high school you were an outcast from all the predominantly dark haired people there. But I was always involved in sports. Then I really started playing music at age nine, and by sixth grade I was starting to become really good on trumpet, and that became my vehicle. In junior high there were two guys improvising jazz without reading little black dots on white paper. I went right up to them and said, “Who are you and how are you doing this?” They said, “You heard about music, these notes go together and it's a whole other language.” That was for me. I started studying music and improvisation and I got really good.

WP: What do you think was the catalyst that really threw you into music?

SH: For me it was a light going on inside my head. What I learned over the years since then is that what I assumed might have been metaphorical, in terms of rhythm and in terms of having melodies that I talked about, maybe in a past life I was a musician, I don't know.

WP: Perhaps so. It would seem to be a high propensity from all the lives we've lived.

SH: Well more than perhaps; supported the first time I read about Edgar Cayce talking about healing music and the ancient healing temples of Egypt. The first time I stepped out on stage by myself in a darkened auditorium in high school and heard that reverb, I got chills. I knew that space, I knew that sound of big cathedrals. Got to college, University of Buffalo, and the second weekend there was a faculty member jazz jam with some incredible musicians. At that point I was always walking around with my trumpet because my teacher said “always have it with you, that's how you become one with the instrument.” Well they saw that and said, “You, out of the audience and up on stage.”

At one point the trumpet took off and started playing by itself. And I was playing things I had never played before. Something was happening. My friends asked “What got into you?” And the leader of that jam, a master teacher of Buffalo said, “We thought that's who you were...come with us.” And that introduced me to a whole other world of spirituality, of tuning into one's muse. Most of the community of Buffalo at that point was the Berkeley of the East, master poets like Robert Duncan, Robbie Krieli and our leader Jack Carr. So that was when music became less analytical – if you're a trumpet player, you played higher and faster. It became music where I became the instrument of the instrument. That's what really opened me up. Having read about the ancient healing music in Greece or Pythagoras in ancient Egypt, that became a quest. I started meditating and praying to hear what that music would sound like. What would

that be for contemporary civilization? Uh, I started reading everything I could find by ancient muses of healing music, and there wasn't much.

WP: Did you see that as an embarking on a new, more spiritual quest? Were you digging deeper into yourself?

SH: A different kind of spirituality, yes. Many of the jazz musicians that I would hang out with and interview like Pharaoh Sanders and many of the people had a strong spirituality. In fact John Coltrane was our ideological patron saint and he really blazed the trail. Hearing his music, understanding where it was coming from really took hold inside, and then the music led me and carried me into different things. Part of that meant practicing music eight hours a day which took me to a place where I who could sit in with anybody. So I got to jam with people like Larry Coryell, Pharaoh Sanders, Ron Carter, Archie Shepp and Frank Zappa and Moby Grape and Rick Derringer and the boys. That for me as a musician was really getting a chance to be with energy. That's where it all came back, and that was a spiritual experience. I went out to California on a two week visit in 1969, before scheduled to go back to graduate school at University of Buffalo, of all places – picture, the graduate over at the library of sciences studying transformation, consciousness and healing. That was obviously a major I made up, but I had an ‘in’ that guaranteed me acceptance. She, my ‘in’, twisted their arm to make sure I would be accepted. Then, 3 days before I was to fly back to New York, I had an experience that changed my life.

That was when spirituality came full centered. I was on my way down to the William Blake Library Museum in Santa Cruz.

WP: How appropriate and synchronistic that you were heading there.

SH: Exactly, because he was one of the masters that we studied in Buffalo with almost a real incarnation of him as our teacher, a William Blake Scholar. So classes were amazing. One day I was guided to a sacred redwood grove and felt my fingers buzzing, felt my ears buzzing, which I've only had one other time which was with some visionary vegetables. I was told to sit down and I started meditating and heard the new music that I've been playing ever since. And I heard a voice saying, “This is your music and you could train to know about it. Your job is to share this with the world.” I was directed to a keyboard with crystalline celestial sound. I started playing that music, people who heard me said, “We don't know who you are but a staff position has just opened, how would you like to be on our staff?” And this was a sister organization to an excellent institution.

WP: Was that in California?

SH: Yes, near Esalen. So I called Buffalo that night and said “Please send my books and my clothes, I'm not coming home. I'm going for the experience.” And every week there would be the leaders of the human potential movement. They wanted somebody who was studying consciousness and music and they said “If you applied I guarantee that you'll get in.” And that's how I became enrolled. This was the end of 1969 so in September of 1970 I was one of the first people in the humanistic psychology institute up at Sonoma State College. There I was introduced to some scientists who helped me do experimental design using bio feedback and brainwave analysis. Most people didn't know what brainwaves were; most people certainly didn't know what auras and electro field photography were.

WP: Let's go back and touch on when use the word ‘energy’ because it's fascinating how you've connected in this way. Is it a tactile sensation for you where you connect ‘in a way’, is it something you feel in your being?

SH: It was something I knew, and it was a spiritual experience. As I would begin to take formal meditation, get into yoga and tai-chi, etcetera, I got to understand that this was all related. I became a channel, a bridge to the world of music and entertain-

ment, spirituality and science. So when the first expos started becoming wild, where I was the keynote speaker, it all came down to the healing powers of sound.

WP: You were a visionary in that sense. You were one of the few people who were looking at music in that way. And you saw music to have the potential to heal.

SH: Absolutely, there are some other musicians like Paul Horn and Lasos, but they weren't putting it out. I created that section having the first album, and I took my music to places that I shopped: yoga centers, health food stores, metaphysical stores and was told “We're a bookstore, we don't sell music.” and I said “But this is the music that Edgar Cayce was talking about.” And as I'm holding up my first album, a little old lady walked up and said “Oh I was looking for meditation music, can I buy that?”

WP: The universe reached out again to support you.

SH: Then the storeowner said “I guess we'd better carry that.” I was a child of the 60's – anything related to business was the enemy. So the concept of doing business in the spiritual way was, you know, not inviting. Those were the places that were open, so that's why I always was on the fringes of the music industry and that's another reason why getting the Grammy nomination was so huge because that is mainstream. They never had someone like me be nominated for a Grammy. I mean, I was a card carrying new-age musician before there was a genre.

WP: I think you're surely thought of as one creating a path. So, it's remarkable that it's come to this space where you are being nominated. That's testimony to what you've done in the sense of expanding a market.

SH: Exactly.

WP: I mean you came into a market that was just basically you, and now they're expanding the market. You've opened the door for the general public to enter.

SH: Oh yeah. That's what I hope will continue to unfold with the Grammy nomination. This can help put New Age music on the map, put healing music on the map.

I started meditating and heard the new music that I've been playing ever since. And I heard a voice saying, “This is your music...”

We've seen this New Age field of music in major labels, and other musicians have tried to label anything that isn't pop or rock as New Age music or healing music. Last year the New Age Grammy went to Pat Metheny playing solo guitar versions of 'What's it all about Alfie', having nothing to do with New Age music. This year it was great that my album called 'Deep Alpha' was nominated, affirming an expansion in the audience for this kind of music. People are looking for an experience, and that's really the key to why I still have a career 38 years into my first album, this music delivers an experience. Dr. Paul Pearson who wrote 'The Heart's Code' introduced me at a concert where he said "Halpern's music makes it possible to have a spiritual experience without naming it." The music resonates the heart, resonates the soul. This music touches something inside and that's been such an honor and a blessing for me.

WP: Fascinating. How do you see it having impacted your journey on a personal level?

SH: I had never gone to a Safeway or stores like that. I shopped at health food stores and metaphysical bookstores; I was in a very small circle. One day one of my teachers said "I'm taking a sabbatical, why don't you take over my job." That got me my first straight job as a music specialist in an elementary school. I got my first credit card which gave me the money to do my first recording session. This really allowed me to come back into the world, to connect with other people, and then to experience the incredible gift of connecting with people in the world through the music. Here again, it's such energy. I was a Type A individual from New York, stressed and showing people diseases of stress, so the people learned how to deal with this. If you don't learn how to manage your stress, you're not going to make it past forty-five, and that got my attention. I realized I needed to get into the space behind the notes, into that stillness. When Eckhart Tolle came out and talked about the 'Power of Now' and I read it I thought, "Wow he's using the same words that I'm using."

WP: A great book. It's had enormous impact on people, much like your music but perhaps less visible to most.

SH: Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer talked about getting into the space between thoughts – the quantum field. When I am recording, one of the pleasures for me is that's my temple. That's the place, particularly not on a live audience, total silence, just

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me and the engineer and the energy and the entities and the intelligences, my angels, my guides.

WP: Are there specific angelic beings that you work with, specific entities that you call upon?

SH: Not by name generally although I've been introduced to some, they don't give me their names but I've been very aware over the years of a number of different bands that I've worked with. When I have the outside people or Doreen Virtue, the angel might be there, or James Van Praagh of course then they tell me things. I don't see that, I feel that. Sometimes I will hear something and I will play it, and sometimes my fingers will play it before I hear it.

WP: It just flows through you.

SH: I remember that you have to stay out of your thinking mind and I'd think "Wow, I've never played that before." And I kind of take a pause, and I get back to the state. Some of my quantum leaps as a musician have been in the recording studio. Things would open up and then as a musician I would say "Oh, I was playing a pentatonic scale starting this" and I could understand what I just did.

WP: So, were you able to replicate it later?

SH: Right! But over the years every one of my albums has had at least one moment where the room filled with light, where there was a much clearer thing. And I thought that this was just happening to me, but at one point my engineer said "Wow, did you just see that? I replied, "That was our visit from the angels right there." We called it a voltage surge. But I was told early on not to mention that because that will take people away from the experience and they'll be more interested in "who's he channeling". This music was altogether different. It wasn't music to impress people, it was to put them in a state where they make their own spiritual connection, have their own spiritual experience.

WP: Do you sense or feel the magnitude of what you've created over the years? How you've touched the masses?

SH: Absolutely. And that was part of I think what I got when the Grammy nomination happened. I'd felt that I'd

been really close some time in the past but they never tell you. That is the first time a meditative album has done that much.

WP: Yes, when you promote it a lot, when you have all the right contacts available to you and of course a budget to support the effort.

SH: And we see that happening all the time. They all had a million dollars or more behind them. My album has none of this. It's only the truly organic that rise to that kind of prominence this way.

WP: Remarkable.

SH: It's also exciting. It's a level of gravitas that this isn't just a belief that we in the New Age had, that this is a really important concept and it's infiltrating and resonating. And that's because the field of consciousness out there is resonating. Sometimes the music arrived fully composed and when I reprinted the writings of Mozart, Liszt, Scriabin, Debussy, some of my ideological patron saints, they would talk about how sometimes they would hear the music in their head and it came out fully formed, and they couldn't use the word 'channeled'. Mozart would say, "I thank God that it sounds Mozartian" And as a musician our antennae are attune to hearing certain things. So my brand of healing is through the music. My in your face persona said, "Okay, I understand there's a gentler way, more effective way, to work with the energy."

WP: That was smart to choose to do that. Look at the enormous success it's brought you. Look how it's open the road for you for 38 years.

SH: Yeah, well I've been on the other end, and that wasn't working. That's when the term 'inner peace' came up, a musical prescription. So the name for my company was 'Sound RX'. People didn't get the RX part so then when focus groups said "I experience inner peace when I listen to your music", one of the consultants that we paid \$2,000 an hour said, "That's the name of your company! End of consultation." I said, "That was just five minutes." And he said, "You got what you came for." That's when I learned that \$2,000 an hour doesn't mean you get the whole hour.

WP: That's all that counts, you received the whole name.

SH: Again, being a Type A individual, I was told earlier that there was no music that you can listen to that gets you relaxed in under twenty minutes. I remember the first time I

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heard that I said "Excuse me, I come from New York. I don't have twenty minutes. What do you have that can get me there in a minute?" They said, "That's impossible." And then I was able to bring the results of our research, scientific data, and biofeedback. Now I see some of these workshops and lectures are the same titles as mine but they say, "presented by [so-and-so], a certified music therapist" as opposed to one of those sound healers who are uncertified.

WP: So what's on the horizon for you now that you are sitting on the precipice of obtaining a Grammy?

SH: I will know more after Sunday. If I win there will be a lot more people saying they'd like to work with me etc. If I don't, we can still build on this because now my next album that was going to be music featuring bamboo flute, shakuhachi with more keyboards has to be changed from 'Deep Bamboo' to be 'Deep Alpha 2'. I already added the eight cycles per second, eight-hertz brain wave entrainment to every track. You get that immediate hit because the brain entrainment enhances the effect of music. But it happens quicker and stronger and has brain wave entrainment and that is the difference.

WP: So is it a process of bringing the left-brain and right brain together into harmony, so to speak?

SH: In a sense it's also adding to frequencies closely related to the left channel and the right channel and the brain picks up on it. Some of them sound like all you hear is Bam, Bam, Bam, Bam. Yes that's brainwave entrainment but that's like hitting you over the head with a two by four. You get entrained but I get stomachaches and I don't want to listen to that. The first law is it must be beautiful. When you're in that state, the music never sounds quite the same.

WP: We look forward this this sequel and our vote is for you on the Grammy. You are a deserving contender and an amazing artist. Thank you for sharing your gifts. 

Steven did not capture the Grammy this year but he's caught the heart and gratitude of countless people for his 35 plus years of work.

His website is www.stevenhalpern.com

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