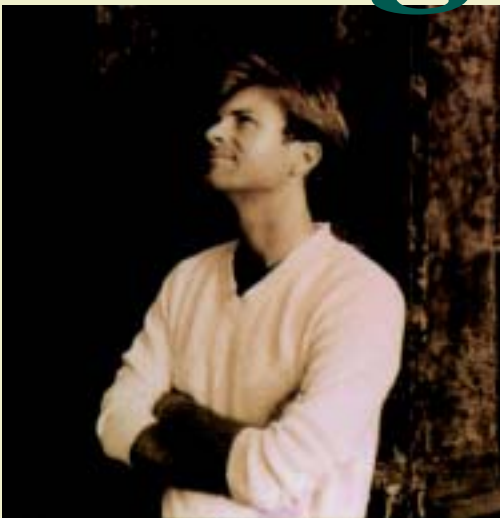


Doug Day is a singer/songwriter who has devoted much of his life to teaching children to write their own songs. He has been a guest instructor at schools all over the world, and has produced numerous tapes and CDs for both kids and adults, including Jackson's Kite and The Elephant Bus, available through KITEMUSIC, 207-526-4443, or DouglasDay@AOL.com.

faith into being



Doug: I am very much aware of the relationship between what one might consider my spiritual life and my musical life, especially when I'm doing it right, or effectively. In teaching kids to make up songs, I am trying to not will the project into fulfillment, but rather, to faith it into being—using wisdom, or inspired thought, rather than will. With children, I can use my male presence as a sometimes funny, always demanding teacher to alpha-male the group into paying attention and focus—but that's less rewarding for me. If I am, rather, trusting the thing into being, it requires that I get into a different state of mind to pull off the work, which is harder at first but much more satisfying in the outcome.

WHJ: I think you're speaking more about the art of teaching than about music.

Doug: You're right, I could be talking about teaching plumbing and it would be the same thing. Nevertheless, what I said applies to performing and writing music as well, in a subtler way. When you're composing, it's the difference between working from inspiration rather than craft. You're bringing craft to it, but you know when you are in the midst of an inspired moment, and one is very grateful that whatever you did—either through luck, the Smiling Gods, or the Big Mystery at work in that moment, as you, through you, for you—you know that it's working and all you're trying to do is keep it! And that's a good thing. Sometimes my best songs are obviously, especially in hindsight, coming from that place. And so, when you talk about cultivating that place as a path to creating more good songs—or, as a path to well-being, rather than the more mercenarial approach of just trying to get a good song out of it—one would try to set up your ambient, metaphysical, mental space to be coming from that inspired place.

WHJ: So we're back to being receptive rather than using the will.

Doug: Yes, but to me it's a little more complex—what receptivity to the Divine means is fortunately very complex—I think. I want it to be complex. I could be wrong—maybe if I were able to work from a simple place I would hit it more often, but the way I do work is I want the creation of that ambient, personal space to be as complex as God is. Accepting that the creative process is as interesting as the path to truth elevates the creative process and puts the process of songwriting into that rare air that I aspire to live in all the time, or more often.

Lately, I'm really interested in how performance differs from writing or teaching music. I don't really want to write songs in a void, so as I approach performing, I'm looking to try and find ways where performance is a vehicle for creating a rare place.

WHJ: What space do you want to generate and/or communicate to an audience? That they go home feeling that their lives are a little better, or what?

Doug: It's more personal than that. The audience is going to be uplifted if the performance is inspired. Period. I stop at that, because I'm not preaching. It's the difference between song and sermon. I once considered a religious path as one who gave sermons and interacted with people metaphysically, and I chose to opt off that path. I consoled my need to do "God-talk" by saying that what I do in song, when I'm on it, is the same thing. When I'm communicating some true deep feeling, then I'm performing—or writing or teaching—from that rare spot that is inspired. You can do a slick performance that works for the slick, but if you do an inspired performance, the people in the room that get it are generally those who are hungry for inspiration. When a fellow performer does a slick performance, I really feel starved for what I went there for—I went to see something of the performer really shared, rather than some skill level of slick chops expressed.

Dawn Song Prayer

In darkness all things hum,
swell with almost being born.
Prayer begins with silence.
Grace rises from the dim ground.
Mine is a prayer of song,
because song is as close as I can come:
my small singing self,
to the mute and musical universe.
Do not wait for your song to find you
Find your song in morning sky.
Welcome it with columbine and lake water.
Call it down, coax it out with sweet leaves.

—C.L. Morton

