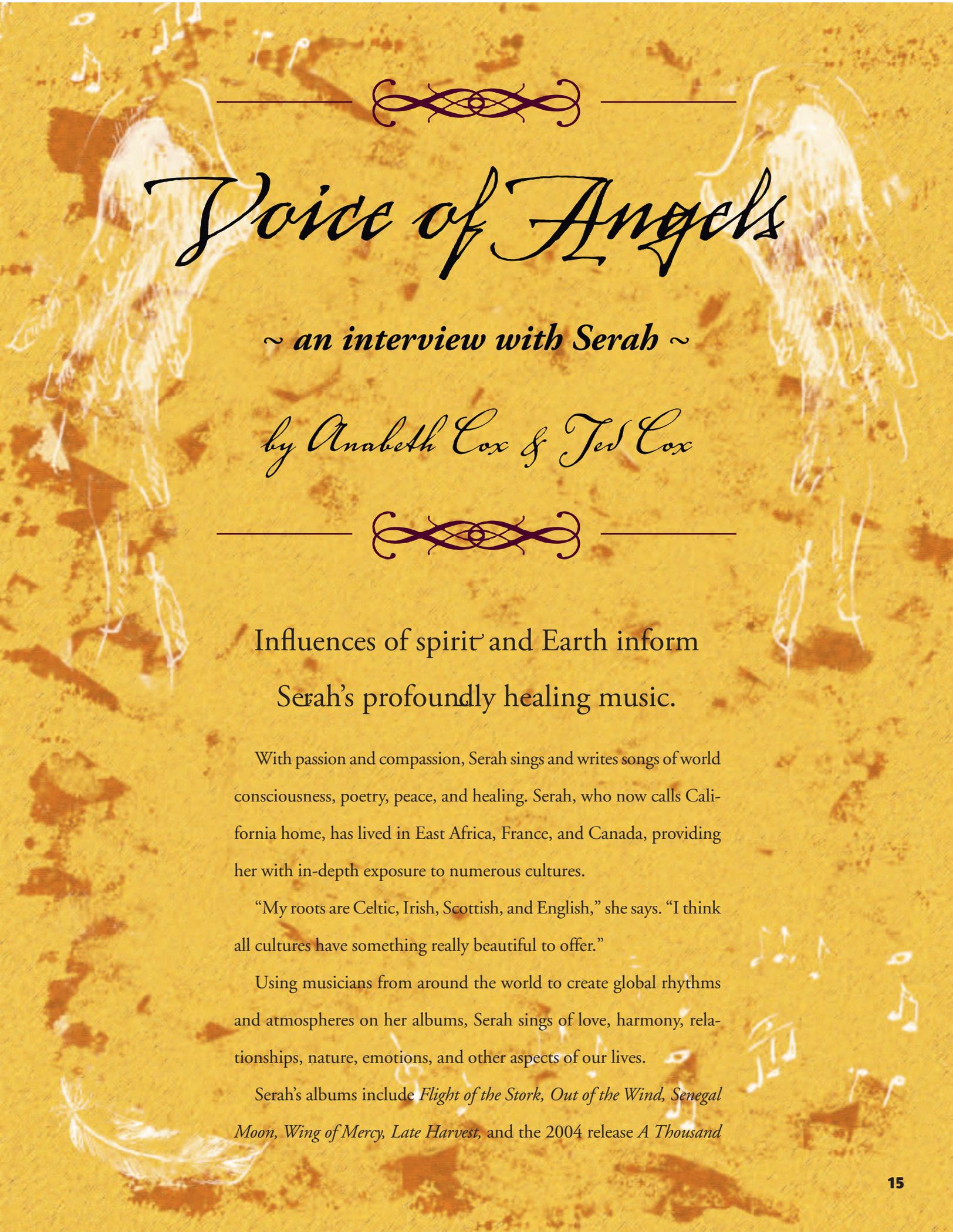






Voice of Angels



~ *an interview with Serah* ~

by *Anabeth Cox & Ted Cox*



Influences of spirit and Earth inform
Serah's profoundly healing music.

With passion and compassion, Serah sings and writes songs of world consciousness, poetry, peace, and healing. Serah, who now calls California home, has lived in East Africa, France, and Canada, providing her with in-depth exposure to numerous cultures.

“My roots are Celtic, Irish, Scottish, and English,” she says. “I think all cultures have something really beautiful to offer.”

Using musicians from around the world to create global rhythms and atmospheres on her albums, Serah sings of love, harmony, relationships, nature, emotions, and other aspects of our lives.

Serah's albums include *Flight of the Stork*, *Out of the Wind*, *Senegal Moon*, *Wing of Mercy*, *Late Harvest*, and the 2004 release *A Thousand*

Candles. Generally falling within the broad grouping of adult-contemporary music, her style acknowledges the spirit of world, New Age, jazz, and folk elements.

Six years ago, Serah performed at a concert for the Hague Appeal for Peace (www.haguepeace.org) to promote a new century of peace upon the 100th anniversary of the First Hague Peace Conference. "I was in-

"For me, songwriting is an unfolding of inspiration and, perhaps, spiritual clarity." — Serah

vited to compose and perform a song specifically for the event," Serah says. "As I worked on the song — 'Hymn of Peace' — I was compelled to flesh out the deep mission of each one of us to love, to heal, and to bring peace."

To listen to Serah's music is to meet Serah herself. Openhearted, generous, deeply emotional, and creatively true, her music is an act of connection and compassion. Learn more about Serah at www.serah.com.

Anabeth Cox and Ted Cox: How did you choose the name Serah?

Serah: In 1980, I went through a very unhappy divorce. I decided to change my name to help lose the baggage of personal history. After a number of sweet little epiphanies, I used the name Serah. It's kind of a nickname for seraphim, the singing archangels, which seemed like a nice idea because I always have wanted to write comforting, healing songs.

A. Cox and T. Cox: What is your first memory of hearing music?

Serah: Probably my grandfather playing the piano. I lived with my mother and grandparents for my first few years of Earth life. My grandfather was a terrific musician, and he would put me on his knees and play away. My grandfather played several instruments in a band during the roaring '20s.

My mom and my grandmother were major influences in my life, and they encouraged me to hold the idea that we are in this world to give, to comfort, and to help make it a better place. My mom was very musical, and music always was playing in our home. I never really studied music. I just picked it up.

My mom and I sang all the time.

A. Cox and T. Cox: When did you begin to sing?

Serah: According to my grandmother, I was singing before I talked. She said I would sing about everything to myself all the time. My mom and I would sing made-up songs and show tunes from *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, *Carousel* — songs like "Yellow Rose of

Texas" and "Johnny Appleseed." If you have something important to say, you sing it — that's what I thought.

A. Cox and T. Cox: How did you learn to play musical instruments?

Serah: I learned to play guitar from a Wyoming cowboy when I was 10. I taught myself piano later on.

A. Cox and T. Cox: When did you start recording music?

Serah: I made my first professional recording in 1977, near the town where I was living in Nova Scotia, Canada. The single was a song I wrote called "Nova Scotia." I took it around to all the local radio stations and had them play it. Back then, music wasn't about big business. It was about real people. If they liked it, they played it — no politics and no payoffs.

To my surprise, "Nova Scotia" became No. 1 in Eastern Canada's Maritime Provinces. But I didn't have management back then, so it was hard to take it any further. Incidentally, I made that first recording under a different name, Carolina Edwards.

A. Cox and T. Cox: How do you promote your recordings now?

Serah: That question is difficult to answer. The music business has changed so much in the past 20 years. A musician used to be able to walk into a radio station or store with a recording, and they would play the music if they liked it. Now the music business is all corporate and a bit like Wal-Mart and McDonald's, which is not good in many ways. It makes it harder for "gourmet" music to be heard.

I find that my best promotion is word of

mouth and the support of friends and fans who love music. Among retailers, independent retailers are the most helpful. They actually listen to the music and can be very supportive. Usually we have similar values — more creative, more compassionate, more green, more interested in the arts — as opposed to the rat-race values of chain-store slavery. Smaller retailers were very supportive of my early albums, including "Flight of the Stork" and "Senegal Moon."

A. Cox and T. Cox: Your music has been classified as New Age, world, folk, pop, and contemporary vocal. In which section do you feel your music fits best?

Serah: Maybe the music spans all those categories. I don't know if I technically fit into a category. Each retailer has to listen to the music and decide in the context of their clientele where to place it.

Perhaps my music is New Age, because of the general healing intent in the lyrics and music; world, because of the inclusion of much African and other world influences, including vocals, instruments, and percussion; and folk, because of the lyrical basis of the songs. Perhaps it is pop, because of a hopefully all-embracing cohesion, and contemporary vocal, because as each album is made it is contemporary, and the vocals and lyrics are the strongest emphasis in the production.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Which of your albums is your favorite?

Serah: Of course, my new album, *A Thousand Candles*, is a favorite now. But all of them, I think, are favorites. They are, in a way, like children. You love them all. You remember where you were when you worked on them. Although, I must say, there always are things I wish I could do over and make better.

A. Cox and T. Cox: What makes *A Thousand Candles* special to you?

Serah: I really am thrilled with this CD. I coproduced it with Dan Marnien, who has worked with Joni Mitchell, as well as with Shawn Colvin and Stevie Nicks. He has a tremendously aware gift, understanding how to genuinely bring out the vocal and lyrics with his engineering and mixing skills. I also

worked on the album with some great musicians, including musicians from Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Senegal.

A. Cox and T. Cox: How did you select the ensemble to work with you on this project?

Serah: Inspiration, unfoldment, and the grace of God. Working with all these musicians is like being in a European church with a lot of stained-glass windows. All of the light comes through in all these different colors, and it is quite sacred. Everyone is a window in their own individual expression. They all have something unique to bring. It's beautiful.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Who painted the wonderful art in the CD's liner notes?

Serah: Most of the pictures were done by my son, Austin Manchester, who is an amazing artist. A few were done by me. The painting on the CD itself was done by Austin. He is a great inspiration to me. His work has been shown in many galleries. His work is evocative and inspiring and always has a hint of mystery and intrigue. His work is both innocent and wise.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Your daughter Grace appears on the album, correct?

Serah: Yes. She is an amazing musician, singer, and songwriter. She goes by the name Grace professionally. She lives in Paris. She is finishing a CD now, which will be available on my website in a few months.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Do you mind if we reprint one of your song poems from the album?

Serah: I would be honored.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Here are the lyrics to "Yes," one of our favorite songs on *A Thousand Candles*:

Yes
So forgetting what's
been done,
Packing your wings
and moving on.

Try to feel what's been said by some;
The point from here has just begun
Like a little child still new to this
Open-eyed receptiveness;
All that's good is deeper yes,
Yes, yes, yes, just like a first kiss
Yes to synchronicity,

*When chords of love and life degree
Yes to spring and summer sea
Yes to possibility.*

*A thousand candles floating down to the
sea*

*Won't set the sea on fire
But like a lovely wind, the breath of love
Lifts up the wings of pure desire.
Yes to love that sets us free
When all the heart and mind agree
Yes to spring and summer sea
Yes to what's inside of me.*

*Help me God, lift up my head
And see the path of light instead
Of this lonely road where my footsteps bled
Saying yes to simple daily bread
Yes to synchronicity
When chords of love and life agree
Yes to spring and summer sea
Yes to possibility.*

A. Cox and T. Cox: What inspires your music?

Serah: My inspiration comes from a place higher than myself. For me, songwriting is an unfolding of inspiration and, perhaps, spiritual clarity. Part of the role of the arts, I feel, is to inspire and to help and heal human needs.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Talk about the process. What comes first — the melody or the lyrics?

Serah: Normally the melody and the lyrics flow together synchronistically. I like to use imagery and metaphors, so there are layers of meaning for everyone who wants to do a little deeper thinking. People either can relate a song to their own lives or enjoy it like a

and play on guitar and piano.

A. Cox and T. Cox: You have been described as doing for Africa what Enya has done for Ireland. Your music has been compared to Joni Mitchell's and Loreena McKennitt's. How do you describe your music?

Serah: I am interested in songs that inspire, comfort, and heal. I also love the idea of our world as a family. Because of my personal experiences in Africa and France, I like to include musicians from those countries, as well as others, to express that world-family feeling.

We certainly have seen a kind of spiritual leavening in human thought throughout the 20th and now 21st centuries, and we clearly still have a long way to go. My music really is about love — love and respect for our world family.

A. Cox and T. Cox: You and your children were in Africa for one and a half years fighting the drought. Please describe your African experiences.

Serah: I had some friends working in a drought area in northern Kenya, and I went to help. When I worked in Africa, at that point in my life, I felt as if doing music maybe wasn't enough. The work was a lot harder than my idealism ever anticipated, but it always seems like something higher than you gets you through things. I feel that it never has stopped blessing me.

I also wanted my children to see other cultures and to see that we are here on Earth to help care for one another. We were staying mainly in Langata, Kenya. We also traveled up to the bush area of Lake Turkana, where the drought has been. We slept on the ground inside a thorn fence. We helped find families

"I hope my music inspires renewal, peace, love for all, and goodness as much as possible." — Serah

short story. Its meaning will be different for every listener.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Do you compose the instrumental arrangements?

Serah: Instrumentals are created by a kind of spontaneous collaboration with musicians on instruments other than what I play. I write

to adopt orphans into their homes. With the help of various people and charities, we were able to give families a goat or a cow and to help build a shelter and a community center.

Another wonderful thing about being there was being introduced to African music. I always love to explore and incorporate the

whole world-music theme, which is so important to my life. I took my guitar with me wherever I went. I would sit down with people in the bush and sing songs that I had written or was writing. People would come from nearby and join in, adding percussion and singing ad libs, just naturally. It was exhilarating. I never had experienced anything like that before.

Music is the heartbeat of Africa. Because of that experience, I became enamored with having African vocals, music, and percussion in my recordings. I wanted to find a way to weave the beautiful African music with my songs in a natural, joyful collaboration.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Who are your favorite artists?

Serah: I listen to all kinds of music, but often I like singer-songwriters, such as Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, and Mark Knopfler, and also many African singers, such as Wasis Diop, Salif Keita, Baba Maal, Richard Bona, and Lokua Kanza. I like older music, as well, including classical music and older jazz and blues. I really like Bonnie Raitt and Cesaria Evora.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Who has been the greatest influence in your music?

Serah: The great spirit — soul.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Do you engage in any spiritual or meditation practice?

Serah: Every morning, I begin my day in prayer, contemplation, and meditation using the Bible and a book called *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I find it very inspiring and indispensable to my life. I do think that truth and inspiration talk to everyone in their own language and that the great spirit is universal. Everyone follows her or his own path of inspiration.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Tell us something about your philosophy of life.

Serah: In a few words, my philosophy is that I am here on earth to love, to give, to learn, and to shine my light as best I can. I lean on spiritual inspiration. I believe that God is love and that this love is an infinite, all-powerful principle that embraces every one of us, whether we acknowledge it or not.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Much of your music has a spiritual quality to it.

Serah: Spirituality is the basis of everything I do, hopefully — overcoming challenges, growing, giving, always trying to reach my highest sense of integrity.

A. Cox and T. Cox: What would you like listeners to get out of your music?

Serah: Some degree of inspiration, joy, comfort, upliftment, and healing. My ideal in music is that it be inspired and that it inspires man's higher nature. Music and songs — both other people's songs and my own creative process — always have been healing for me. I hope my music inspires renewal, peace, love for all, and goodness as much as possible.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Describe your philosophy about conditions in the world today and how your music relates to it.

Serah: It seems that all the negative — which can range from awful to horrific — that is going on in the world is coming to the surface for us, as mankind, to heal. Even if we feel we are just little raindrops in the grand scheme of things, every raindrop makes a prism rainbow when filled with light. I listen for, search for, and try to express the inner light — the light that lights all that is beautiful and good.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Are you working on any projects outside of music?

Serah: I work with a small charity that helps individuals and families who help others metaphysically. I also have been involved with the Women's World Summit Foundation, which helps abused women and children in rural Africa and other parts of the world. And I work with the Grammy Foundation, which focuses on funding music programs in financially disadvantaged public schools.

A. Cox and T. Cox: Any final thoughts you would like to share, Serah?

Serah: There are, of course, many varied tastes in the arts, but music is the great connector. The largest living organism on planet Earth that I have heard of is a grove of Aspen trees in Colorado that are connected at the roots as one continuous whole. These trees give us an idea — a glimpse — of the connectedness in life that music can make us feel. It is a good feeling, full of joy, hope, and healing. I hope my music helps listeners feel this goodness.

Anabeth Cox and Ted Cox both are classically trained in music. Ted received a decade of retail experience as a classical and New Age manager and buyer at Tower Records. Anabeth also has several years of retail and marketing experience.