

Soulful Songs and Stories



With a song and your stories, we co-create a soft place for hard conversations and a brave space for personal and spiritual growth.

Hi Soulful Song Lovers and Story Tellers,

This is my story, this is my song: lessons from lockdown

“This is my story, this is my song” is taken from the hymn, “Blessed Assurance.” The tune lends itself to all kind of variations and interpretations, and even if the literal lyrics don’t speak to many UUs, they are moving when performed with passion.

“Blessed Assurance,” Phoebe Palmer Knapp, composer; Fanny Crosby, lyrics
Emmanuel Garilus <https://youtu.be/DJDZOY-8IbQ> 4:47 (sax solo)

Ayo Solanke <https://youtu.be/QzBQ2LIRKE8> 7:25 (inst.)

Souled Out Jazz Orchestra <https://youtu.be/jcWHK6Tw6Io> 4:32 (inst.)

CeCe Winans & Choir <https://youtu.be/LIXTjBfUjY?t=52> 3:10 (sung)

Revealed: Kafkaesque superfluosity, brutal inefficiencies, and problems.

Many well-compensated but burnt-out knowledge workers have long felt that their internal ledger books were out of balance, and they saw no easy options for changing their circumstances. Then came shelter-in-place orders and shuttered office buildings. The unceasing presence of video conferencing and email enhanced the Kafkaesque superfluosity of many of the activities that dominated the pre-pandemic workday.

—Cal Newport, *New Yorker*, Aug 16, 2021

*Remote work lays bare many brutal inefficiencies and problems. It empowers those who produce and disempowers those who have succeeded by being excellent diplomats and poor workers. Without the physical office space—the place where people are yelled at in private offices or singled out in meetings—it becomes a lot harder to spook people as a type of management. —Ed Zitron, *The Atlantic*, Jul 29, 2021*

A Steve story: I've always had a low tolerance for red tape, the unnecessary, the tedious, and BS. The pandemic was a great magnifier, allowing us to see, perhaps for the first time, that the good things were very, very good, the bad things were horrid, and the useless things were exposed as unacceptable. Although **Soulful Songs and Stories** was crafted to be open and simple and democratic, built around *your* stories, it now seems that it could be distilled even further. A cumbersome covenant could be reduced to two words: *respect* and *kindness*. A page of guidelines and suggestions could simply be replaced with "no phones." It is important to know and call each other by our names, but the time consuming distribution and collection of name tags that may be hard to read from across the room could be eliminated by "please tell me your name again." Can we be more minimalist?



"There is none of the traditional scaffolding that we're accustomed to on podcasts—Dave Chappelle does not bother with overly formal preludes, introductions, or signposts."

—Carrie Battan, *New Yorker*, Jun 14, 2021

Revealed: how much your friend, lover, partner, spouse means to you. Or doesn't.

It seemed *de rigueur* that every magazine and newspaper had to have at least one story of how roommates became lovers, friends became soulmates, couples split, weddings were called off, people fled relationships that revealed themselves as toxic, and if you were married, how you grew closer to your spouse, became less tolerant, or filed for divorce. Heidi and Steve passed the lockdown test more committed than ever, and this song is for us and all those closer to their significant other.

"My Baby Just Cares for Me," Gus Kahn, Walter Donaldson

Nina Simone (Live at Montreux) <https://youtu.be/OeHTsR5Yrbc> 6:26

Andrea Motis & the Sant Andreu Jazz Band <https://youtu.be/sWsvwqHvL-M> 3:58

For others, "So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, adieu" may be more appropriate.

Revealed: The glory of fresh or refreshed music that literally moves you, body and soul.

For some the call to worship comes as joy spurts from jazz riffs, wonder thunders from tappers' feet. Each artistic moment is just slightly beyond our horizon of understanding. What a gift it is, this lack of understanding.

—Barbara Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*

Maia Swan sings with a mariachi band on the beach

<https://youtu.be/28eoBOFyPNo?t=570> 3:34

▼ <https://j.mp/3p9y9R6> or

Middle Collegiate Church: music & movement <https://t.co/R6QadqY4ZI>

When we picked the 323 musical pieces in the 39 **Soulful Songs and Stories** PDFs emailed during lockdown, we looked for things other than the same ol' same ol', which had become less and less satisfying. SARS-CoV-2 pushed us to look for (and find) so much new music, old music done in new ways, and music that moves your soul or makes you want to move your body, that we came to appreciate creativity, innovation, and improvisation more than ever.

“River,” Leon Bridges (NPR Tiny Desk Concert)

https://youtu.be/C_oACPWGvM4?t=780 5:01 Click “show more” and read the notes.

“Rondo alla Turca,” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart/Yuja Wang

<https://youtu.be/NJdzGLK3gfc?t=10> 2:47 Wang plays this like no other. Also: <https://youtu.be/RGAPTRrAilY>

“Just A Closer Walk With Thee,” Joan Chamorro Group and

Magalí Datzira <https://youtu.be/bylCFXdWoco> 6:10

This is probably the jazziest and most sensual version you’ve ever heard.

“Nightflyer,” Allison Russell, Jeremy Lindsay/Allison Russell

<https://youtu.be/eovUiXuaM1rk> 5:33 click “CC” for lyrics

“Nightflyer’ is about the redemptive, restorative, transcendent power of love, of chosen family and community, of art and creativity. ‘Nightflyer’ comes from ‘The Thunder: Perfect Mind,’ an exhortatory poem discovered among the Gnostic manuscripts in the Nag Hammadi library.” —AR

“Anthem,” Leonard Cohen/Charles Lloyd & The Marvels

<https://youtu.be/xCQNUVHR9DM> 6:17 Luxurious jazz rendition of Cohen’s classic.

John Coltrane’s A Love Supreme: Live in Seattle is a revelation. It is not better or worse than the original, but it is different. Hearing such beloved strains in a new context challenges the sanctity of the familiar object. It forces us to reconsider what is lost when we allow the snapshots that recordings provide to take the place of the real thing.

—Taylor Ho Bynum, *The Baffler*, Sep 23, 2021

Revealed: More gratitude, more sharply focused priorities.

“In the last weeks, I’ve found myself riding a surge of gratitude for ordinary pleasures I did not realize I took for granted before the pandemic. The miracle of the vaccine, the reunions it made possible, made me feel electrified, reborn. I’m making promises to myself to keep attending to the elemental joys and new groundedness and life energy that have been an unexpected gift amidst so much hardness.” —Krista Tippett, *The Pause*, Aug 21, 2021

Barrie Rein Thunemann was a spiritual seeker for decades, looking for a deep Jewish spirituality guided by socially liberal ethics. It took the pandemic for her to find it. “My spirituality has increased hundreds-fold because of the pandemic, because everything under the sun became accessible online. If it wasn’t for the pandemic I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to turn inward as much as I did and slow down,” she said, her voice breaking. “It helped me to prioritize the things that really were the most important to me in my heart. It changed my journey.” —Michelle Boorstein, *Washington Post*, Sep 5, 2021

“I Remember Everything,” John Prine <https://youtu.be/L2rTcDtL6M> 3:00

This is Prine’s last song. “With subtle production and lines about looking back on life, the ballad is a beautiful send off from one of America’s greatest songwriters.”

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/john-prine-i-remember-everything-1014339>

Symphony #3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs),

II, Tranquillissimo, Henryk Górecki/Dawn Updhaw, London Sinfonietta

<https://youtu.be/HN2DiY5OXF4> 9:28 full symphony: https://youtu.be/87DJFi_vwQA 53:32

Sorrowful doesn’t have to mean gloomy. Sumptuous music to remember loved ones.

Revealed: all I really need to know I learned in kindergarten

The Alphabet Song <https://youtu.be/IpIhzFhoyw8> 1:30

The problem isn’t learning: it’s unlearning. We need to unlearn the mental models that have grown outdated or obsolete [or that we shouldn’t have been taught in the first place]. The process of unlearning has three parts. First, you have to recognize that the old mental model is no longer relevant or effective. Second, you need to find or create a new model that can better achieve your goals. And third, you need to ingrain the new mental habits. —Mark Bonchek, Harvard Business Review, Nov 3, 2016

Teach Your Children, Graham Nash/Playing For Change <https://youtu.be/P5AuFDHdrrg>

▲6:14

“Good Bones,” Maggie Smith

Life is short, though I keep this from my children.

Life is short, and I’ve shortened mine

in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,

a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways

I’ll keep from my children. The world is at least

fifty percent terrible, and that’s a conservative

estimate, though I keep this from my children.

For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.

For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,

sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world

is at least half terrible, and for every kind

stranger, there is one who would break you,

though I keep this from my children. I am trying

to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,

walking you through a real shithole, chirps on

about good bones: This place could be beautiful,

right? **You** could make this place beautiful.

“Chanda Mama,” Playing for Change <https://youtu.be/IdLZpoJEXfo> 3:51

A folk tune from Chennai, India, “this track has a feeling of perseverance and joy.”