

More About Circlesinging

People circlesinging all over the world in countless different ways and it dates back to the earliest forms of human singing. Our circle draws on traditions of chant, jazz and gospel improvisation, meditation and mindfulness to create one-of-a-kind choral improvisations. It is accessible to beginning singers, but also challenges and inspires the very experienced. The fundamental building blocks of rhythm, melody, and harmony are used in repeated patterns, creating music unique to the moment. Under Patricia Norton's guidance, singers of all levels of experience are challenged, but not intimidated.

Sometimes the circle invites a solo improviser into the center, sometimes it stays in the meditative pulse of a musical pattern. Circles reflect the people in them -- folk, jazz, African, bluegrass, Mediterranean, South-American, pop, gospel, rock, hip-hop, classical, funk, new-age, Québécois, beatboxing -- you bring what is in you, no need to label it, and it becomes part of the circle.

Vocal improviser and educator [Amado Ohland](#) created a history and collected useful links about circlesinging. Many attribute the renaissance of the practice of circlesinging to [Bobby McFerrin](#). There may have been other leaders who were experimenting with this form at about the same time, but Bobby helped raise it as an art and increase its visibility.

Bobby recruited singers for a group he dubbed "[Voicestra](#)."

They appear on two tracks of his 1990 album "[Medicine Music](#)," are recorded in the act on the 19th of July, 1997 episode of "[Sessions at West 54th](#)," and are featured on the 1997 album "[Circle Songs](#)."

Several members of that ensemble, perhaps most notably the [WeBe3](#) trio of [Rhiannon](#), [Joey Blake](#), and Dave Worm ([Sovoso](#), [Glass House](#), [Oakland Circlesings](#)), kept the tradition going and developed other techniques for improvised choral singing. Together with Bobby McFerrin, Voicestra alumni [Judi Donaghy Vinar](#) and [Christiane Karam](#), body percussionist and cooperative practitioner [Zuza Gonçalves](#), and beatboxing artist [Tiago Grade](#) (Rizumik) they make up the faculty of a week-long workshop called [Circlesongs](#), held at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY. Patricia has attended the workshop annually since 2015.



David Dzubinski 2019