

THE INCREDIBLE FLEXIBLE YOU - Creating The Songs by Tom Chapin & Phil Galdston

We are both longtime songwriters and we've each written in many different styles and genres. But the challenge of illustrating the powerful ideas underlying Social Thinking brought us back to the basics of words and music: communication. Unlike most songwriting, in which the writer has to dream up the idea and story, we were presented with highly developed concepts and lessons. So, the content was clear. Our job was to take it and create fresh, catchy, singable songs for families.

Where You Think A Thought is the first song we wrote together, and it set a happy, folksy tone for us, the collection and, hopefully, the listener. Beginning with a lyric concept (name body parts and play a game with them), we created word pictures and rhymes to connect them: fingers/snap, hands/clap, toes/tap, etc. Then, we added wacky vocal and sound effect responses. But the key was to drive all of this to the conclusion *your brain is where you think a thought*. The catchy musical feel is based on a guitar/bass figure Tom learned from the great ragtime bluesman, the Rev. Gary Davis.

Show Me What You're Feeling is one of the last songs we wrote, responding to the authors' request to include a "movement piece." This one started with a dance beat, over which we used images that the authors provided ("when you're happy, you're up and open," etc.) to clarify the physical manifestations of feelings. We thought we had a strong set of words and music, but the song really came to life with the amazing contributions of vocalists Neal Coomer and Tom's daughters, Abigail and Lily, soulful, wailing saxophone by Andy Snitzer, and a funky electric guitar part by the extraordinary Nile Rodgers.

The Plan started with a lyric construct, "you and me and we," which seemed like such a fun, kid-like way of describing a group. Then Phil and I went back and followed the logic: when it's you, alone vs. when it's 'you and me and we.' The way the words fit together suggested a musical walking beat and that strong falling bass line. Once Bernd Schoenhart added electric guitar backbeats, Andy Snitzer played the one-man sax section, and Neil Coomer sang those great Beatlesque "Aahs," the song really started to jump.

For ***Think With Your Eyes***, we started with rhyming word-pictures, like "grin/ chin" and "frown/smile upside down." Then we had fun playing with metaphors (for example, eyes as a microscope, telescope, lighthouse, camera) designed to illustrate the main idea of using what you see to inform what you know. When the authors asked us to accentuate the most important line, "When you're looking at me I know you're thinking of me," we repeated it as the final cadence. Musically, we wanted a track that builds throughout, from walking standup bass and a solo voice, to a full rocking band with background voices aspiring to the great blends of the Mamas and Papas, The Byrds, and the Eagles.

In The Group began with the chant, "Everybody has a body, keep your body in the group," which we liked because it's inclusive, nails the message, and the three 'body's' link together to make a very catchy phrase.

For the verses, Tom invented a little number game, "If it's one, make it two. Make it me and you. If it's two, make it three, you and you and me...", etc. This is not only fun, but illustrates and leads directly into the chorus. The key to recording the song was Phil finding a wonderfully funky New Orleans drum pattern, which suggested the wah-wah guitar, a couple of key changes, and, finally, a gospel choir featuring Lucy Woodward.

Listen With All Of You is a musical game. Starting with non-sensical single words over a catchy fingerpicking guitar figure, we added words to each verse, until the whole idea comes into focus. When the chorus hits, it makes the point that we need to use all of our senses to take in what's being communicated to us. The combination of acoustic guitar, banjo, tuba, accordion, mandolin, and horn sounds produces a happy, circus-like feel. Once we added our personal children's choir, the positive energy jumped!