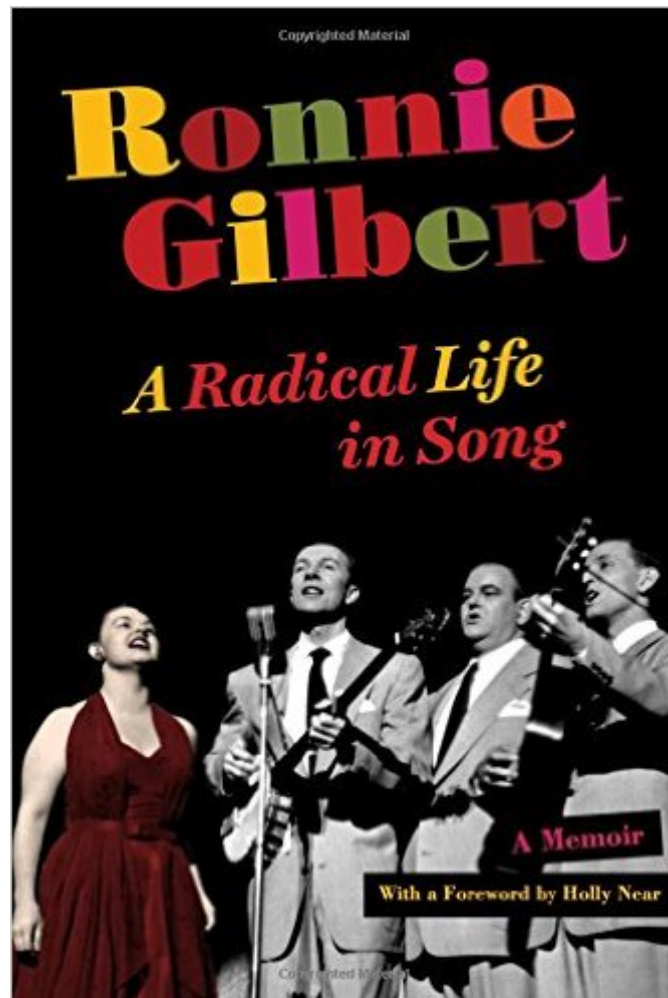


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# Ronnie Gilbert: A Radical Life In Song



## Synopsis

Ronnie Gilbert had a long and colorful career as a singer, actor, playwright, therapist, and independent woman. Her lifelong work for political and social change was central to her role as a performer. Raised in Depression-era New York City by leftist, working-class, secular Jewish parents, Gilbert is best known as a member of the Weavers, the quartet of the 1950s and '60s that survived the blacklist and helped popularize folk music in America. Her joyous contralto and vibrant stage presence enriched the celebrated group and propelled Gilbert into a second singing career with Holly Near in the 1980s and '90s. As an actor, Gilbert explored developmental theater with Joseph Chaikin and Peter Brook and wrote and performed in ensemble and solo productions across the United States and Canada. Ronnie Gilbert brings the political, artistic, and social issues of the era alive through song lyrics and personal stories, traversing sixty years of collaborations in life and art that span the folk revival, the Cold War blacklist, primal therapy, the back-to-the-land movement, and a rich, multigenerational family story. Much more than a memoir, Ronnie Gilbert is a unique and engaging historical document for readers interested in music, theater, American politics, the women's movement, and left-wing activism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I much enjoyed the book, having lived through the times, from "Goodnight Irene" forward. For many, it will be a history lesson, so best to enjoy history. For me it was reminiscence, which I often haven't time for. Unless the memories are happy ones. as my memories of those trying, exciting times are.

For those of us who thought that Ronnie Gilbert was JUST part of the legendary Weavers, this autobiography is an eye opener. Far from just being part of the Weavers, Ronnie Gilbert's life has been a series of stepping stones, leading to new adventures in the arts and living. She was part of the early protest song movement before the Weavers, and then came the Weavers, a group that burst on the music scene in the early 50s, only to be hurt by the McCarthy scare of the 50s – one of the dark periods in American history. Yet her life didn't end with the disbanding of the Weavers; instead, she became an actress and knew and worked with many of the famous directors and playwrights of the era. She became a Primal Scream therapist out of her own need for help and renewal; lived in and worked in British Columbia for a number of years, before returning to a more activist life. Her activist life, begun with her mother's devotion to social justice, is still not over – this is an amazing revelation for me, and demonstrates just how one can lead the active, socially conscious life well into old age.

I grew up listening to The Weavers and it has been wonderful having the background story of the evolution of the group. Ronnie Gilbert's voice is clear and pure and a pleasure to listen to (I've been playing and re-playing Weavers at Carnegie Hall CD). I also just saw the movie "Trumbo" so more background on the McCarthy witch hunts has really broadened my knowledge of that blight of time in our history. If you have not heard the music you can still find The Weavers music as well as Pete Seeger.

Ronnie Gilbert is a folk legend. Her book does not disappoint. She is a wonderful storyteller who shares the behind the scenes life fans may not know about. A must read for folk and women's music fans!

I first heard Ronnie Gilbert sing when I went to a Holly Near/Ronnie Gilbert concert. They sang of courage, of oppression, of their love of women and so much more. I knew Ronnie Gilbert was in the Weavers and certainly knew who Pete Seeger was and when I received this review copy from Netgalley I was thrilled to learn more about this amazing singer/activist whose voice was so clear and true that I ran out and bought all of her CD's. And so, I was fairly disappointed in her memoir. I learned a lot about her; the facts of her life. I did enjoy reading about her time after the Weavers and with Holly Near and understanding the arc of her activism throughout the years. Yet, the memoir felt flat. While I came to appreciate the life that she lived I did not understand who she was; her

motivations and what she felt at different choice points or about the people in her life. For example, I never understood why she became involved in primal scream and what it meant for her. For me, Ronnie Gilbert: A Radical Life in Song had breadth but little depth. This is more a biography than a memoir and though I appreciated coming to know this vibrant and courageous woman I would have liked to understand her heart and spirit even more. Thank you to NetGalley for allowing me to review this book for an honest opinion.

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