

Why Sound Healing by Sheila Whittaker

I think it is being recognised now, more than ever before, that sound plays a huge part in our lives, either for good or otherwise. We can be adversely affected by unpleasant sound in subtle ways; roadworks, noisy building works, or loud music in shops can jangle our nerves.

In contrast, the pleasure of sitting down and listening to a great piece of music on CD or at a concert is difficult to surpass. It takes us to a different place in consciousness. We all know how relaxed and rejuvenated we feel after such a pleasurable listening sensation.

So for years we have been using harmonious music and sound as self-therapy when we feel the need to relax and de-stress after, for instance, a hard day at work. What we are doing is bringing our subtle energy system back into balance with music.

Sound Healing is one step further than that. Sound Healers are deliberately using certain known, beneficial sounds to consciously impact our being in a positive way, on all levels, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

To do this we use the voice, gongs, singing bowls, tuning forks, violin and other instruments that appear to have proven healing and stress-relieving properties. Some of these instruments have been in use for thousands of years in many different cultures. I think we are just starting to realise that the ancients had a lot more knowledge and wisdom than we previously gave them credit for!

As a classically trained musician, with a mother who was a gifted professional pianist, I have always been aware of the positive effects of good music played well - I was brought up on it from an early age. I have always enjoyed my work in the classical arena, both teaching and performing.

It wasn't until I came across Sound Healing many years ago, that I discovered my true vocation. I realised that the application of certain types of sound could be used so simply and effectively for healing on all levels and for the relief of stress, which I believe is at the root of all dis-ease.

My work has taken me, via a series of synchronicities, into the world of gongs. An odd world, you may think, and not, as yet, very well known. I think it will become much more widely-known in the years to come because of its' obvious effectiveness in the growing field of Sound Healing. I now use the highest quality large gongs as my principal Sound Healing tools.

When I first heard the gong, played by my teacher Grand Gongmaster Don Conreaux, I was completely blown away by the sound and the effect it had. It was totally compelling and turned out to be life changing for me. I knew I had found the ultimate Sound Healing

instrument and that this was the work I was here to do at this time. Since then, I have immersed myself in Sound Healing and particularly in this world of the gong.

If you haven't yet had a direct experience of the gong, you may not understand what I am talking about here. The gong needs to be experienced. You can read about it and hear about it from other people, but as with other things, until you have actually had the experience, you won't totally understand.

The gong contains an awesome power but we rarely use the full volume of the instrument, only occasionally at certain key points in our work. Played well and in certain ways, the gong works its' magic using the huge variety of tones and harmonics present in the instrument at lower levels of volume.

We always approach the gongs with respect and humility, without ego, and act as channels for whatever sounds need to come through the gongs at any given moment. In effect we don't play the gong, the gong plays us! It is a great privilege to work with these instruments in this intuitive way.

Gongbath recipients normally lie down in order to get the full benefits of the gong sounds. We call it a "gongbath" as you are literally bathed in the sounds of the gongs. The Om or Aum sound made by the gong creates a feeling of timelessness. You become immersed in the sound, and time as we know it disappears. It also has the effect of de-materialisation - people usually lose all sensation of the physical body, and often have the experience of floating in space, or in an ocean.

Going deeper, the Universal quality becomes more apparent. Many people report feeling at One with the Universe and everything. I have some clients who have experienced past lives during a gong bath. Other people may have visions or see colours. Some people become so relaxed that they go into deep sleep. It is not unknown for people to sleep right through a gongbath!

The usual effect of the gong is to take you into a state of deep meditation. This is the state where healing can more readily occur, as the mind is still, so that the body can concentrate on drawing in the sounds it needs to re-align and harmonise itself on all levels. Most people emerge from a gongbath feeling extremely relaxed, re-energised and refreshed, as though they have had good nights' sleep.

It is not unknown for aches and pains to have disappeared, some many years old. And the silence which settles after the gongbath has finished is very profound. The sounds of the gongs have cleared away old energy and created a sacred space and high vibrational energy in the room. Most people want to remain in that wonderful space for as long as possible.

At the Mind Body Spirit festival every year we give mini-gongbaths so that people can have a ten-minute taster session behind the gong before committing to a full-length gongbath or one-to-one therapy session. This is a good way to have your first experience

of Sound Healing with the gong. However, it is no substitute for a full-length session, which will be even more beneficial.

So now, in a roundabout way, I have come back to the question at the head of this article Why Sound Healing? I've answered my own question. The answer is - BECAUSE IT WORKS! It has worked for thousands of years, but we forgot, somewhere along the way.

Now we're beginning to realise and recall the wisdom of our ancient ancestors and we're learning to apply sound consciously for the benefit of mankind in therapeutic ways. I think in the next few years, Sound Healing will become known the world over, and it's about time! We need as much help as we can get during this turbulent period on Earth! Now where's that gong?