

Exploring the Therapeutic Effects of Gong Baths on Body, Mind, and Soul

Joan Stewart, BA Hons Phil

vitala333@gmail.com

[Go directly to the text of the paper](#)

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on sound therapy in general and gong therapy in particular for their ability to heal mind, body, and soul by providing a broader picture from various angles. This paper's methodology makes use of empirical review, mystical literature, and anecdotal evidence. Thus, this paper also examines information from practitioners in the field. The types of instruments used in sound therapy might include a gong, crystal singing bowls, metal bowls, Tibetan singing bowls, tuning forks, and chimes. The primary focus in this paper is on gongs, due to their use in Rosicrucian rituals. However, for practical research and fact-finding purposes, it is unavoidable that material from interchangeable modalities and terms such as gong therapy, sound therapy, and sound healing be used for support as they all relate to, encompass, and have similar effects of a gong bath on human beings with the potential to access higher states of consciousness.

Keywords: mindfulness, gong baths, sound therapy, frequency, acoustics, binaural beats, resonance, psychic centers, mitochondria, parasympathetic system, brainwave entrainment, Vagus nerve, DNA, biochemical response, synchronicity, Vital Life Force, Cosmic Consciousness, neuroplasticity, alloys

Exploration des effets thérapeutiques des bains de gong sur le corps, l'esprit et l'âme

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de mettre en lumière la thérapie sonore en général et la thérapie par le gong en particulier, pour leur capacité à guérir l'esprit, le corps et l'âme en fournissant une image plus large sous différents angles. La méthodologie de cet article fait appel à une étude empirique, à la littérature mystique et à des preuves anecdotiques. Ainsi, l'article examine également les informations fournies par les praticiens dans ce domaine. Les types d'instruments utilisés en thérapie sonore peuvent inclure un gong, des bols chantants en cristal, des bols métalliques, des bols chantants tibétains, des diapasons et des carillons. Le document se concentre principalement sur les gongs, en raison de leur utilisation dans les Rituels rosicruciens. Toutefois, à des fins de recherche pratique et d'établissement des faits, il est inévitable d'utiliser du matériel provenant de modalités et de termes interchangeables tels la thérapie par les gongs, la thérapie par le son et la guérison par le son, car ils sont tous liés, englobent et ont des effets similaires à un bain de gongs sur les êtres humains ayant le potentiel d'accéder à des états de conscience plus élevés.

Mots clés : pleine conscience, bains de gong, thérapie sonore, fréquence, acoustique, battements binauraux, résonance, centres psychiques, mitochondries, système parasympathique,

entraînement des ondes cérébrales, nerf vague, ADN, réponse biochimique, synchronicité, force vitale, conscience cosmique, neuroplasticité, alliages.

Explorando los Efectos Terapéuticos de los Baños de Gong en el Cuerpo, la Mente y el Alma

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es ayudar a comprender acerca de la terapia del sonido en general y la terapia con gong en particular por su capacidad para sanar la mente, el cuerpo y el alma proporcionando una imagen más amplia desde varios ángulos. La metodología de este artículo utiliza una revisión empírica, literatura mística y evidencia anecdótica. Por lo tanto, este artículo también examina la información de los profesionales en el campo. Los tipos de instrumentos utilizados en la terapia del sonido pueden incluir un gong, cuencos de cristal, cuencos de metal, cuencos tibetanos, diapasones y campanillas. El enfoque principal de este artículo está en los gongs, debido a su uso en los rituales Rosacruz. Sin embargo, para fines prácticos de investigación y de búsqueda de datos, es inevitable que se utilice material de modalidades y términos intercambiables como terapia de gong, terapia de sonido y sanación con sonido como apoyo, ya que todos se relacionan entre sí, abarcan y tienen efectos similares a los de un baño de gong en seres humanos con el potencial de acceder a estados superiores de conciencia.

Palabras clave: atención plena, baños de gong, terapia de sonido, frecuencia, acústica, latidos binaurales, resonancia, centros psíquicos, mitocondrias, sistema parasimpático, arrastre de ondas cerebrales, nervio vago, ADN, respuesta bioquímica, sincronidad, Fuerza Vital, Conciencia Cósmica, neuroplasticidad, aleaciones

Explorando os Efeitos Terapêuticos dos Banhos de Gong em Corpo, Mente e Alma

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é lançar luz sobre a terapia sonora em geral e, em particular, sobre a gongoterapia, por sua capacidade de curar a mente, o corpo e a alma, fornecendo uma imagem mais ampla, sob vários ângulos. A metodologia deste artigo faz uso de revisão empírica, literatura mística e evidências anecdóticas. Assim, este artigo também examina informações obtidas de profissionais da área. Os instrumentos usados na terapia sonora podem incluir gongos, tigelas de cristal, tigelas de metal, tigelas tibetanas, diapasones e sinos. O foco principal deste artigo são os gongos, devido ao seu uso em rituais Rosacruz. Todavia, para fins de pesquisa prática e averiguação de fatos, é inevitável que o material de modalidades intercambiáveis e termos como gongoterapia, terapia sonora e cura pelo som sejam usados para suporte, pois todos eles estão relacionados, abrangem e têm efeitos semelhantes a um banho de gongo em seres humanos, com o potencial de acessar estados elevados de consciência.

Palavras-chave: atenção plena, banhos de gongo, terapia sonora, frequência, acústica, batidas binaurais, ressonância, centros psíquicos, mitocôndrias, sistema parassimpático, sincronização de ondas cerebrais, nervo vago, DNA, resposta bioquímica, sincronidade, Força Vital, Consciência Cósmica, neuroplasticidade, ligas

Eine Studie über die therapeutische Wirkung von Gong- Anwendungen auf Körper, Geist und Seele

Zusammenfassung

Diese Abhandlung nimmt Klangtherapie allgemein und insbesondere Gongtherapie unter die Lupe. Ihre Fähigkeit Körper, Geist und Seele heilen zu können wird aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln umfassend dokumentiert. Die angewandte Methodik beinhaltet eine empirische Revision, mystische Literatur und anekdotisches Beweismaterial. Demnach untersucht dieser Aufsatz Informationen von Praktikern im praktischen Einsatz. Die in der Klangtherapie benutzten Instrumenten sind u.A. Gongs, Klangschalen aus Kristall, Metallschalen, tibetische Klangschalen, Stimmgabeln und Glöckchen. Hier werden hauptsächlich Gongs untersucht, da diese einen wichtigen Teil der rosenkreuzerischen Rituale darstellen. Dennoch ist es für praktische Untersuchungen und für die Erforschung des Sachverhalts unumgänglich, dass Behandlungen mit auswechselbaren Ausführungsarten und Bedingungen wie Gongtherapie und Klangtherapie als Stütze genutzt wurden, denn sie alle stehen in Zusammenhang miteinander, sind umfassend und haben auf Menschen ähnliche Auswirkungen als ein Gong Bad. Sie haben das Potential höhere Bewusstseinssebenen zu erreichen.

Schlüsselworte: Achtsamkeit, Gong Anwendungen, Klangtherapie, binaurale Beats, Resonanz, psychische Zentren, Mitochondrien, parasympathisch System, Hirnwellen Synchronisation, Vagusnerv, DNA, biochemische Respons, Synchronizität, vitale Lebenskraft, Kosmisches Bewusstsein, Neuroplastizität, Legierungen

Introduction

Humans just know that they exist. There has been an ongoing debate in Western academia concerning the mind-body connection for centuries. The hard problem of consciousness comes from the attempt to make sense of how and why a physical organism can be conscious rather than nonconscious, and what, in a mental state, determines what it feels like to have self-awareness.¹

In the search for happiness, there seems to be a chasm between empiricism, logic, and reason versus universal knowledge and direct soul awareness. Quantum theories delve into a nano world where the boundaries seem to dissipate. The neurosciences seem to be bridging the gap but still cannot explain what gives us life. How can we experience and emanate peace, harmony, and love? How can the body heal without logical thought?

In the West, sound therapies using percussion instruments have gained prominence, one of them being gong baths. This paper examines sound therapy through the lens of gong baths and shows its interrelationship with mystical experiences to demonstrate the different aspects of the human body as an apt instrument in shaping realizations of our earthly existence through sound resonance. Gong therapy, as a relatively new modality, however, has not yet been a subject of considerable empirical research despite gongs being used in ritualistic signaling in many cultures. With the proliferation of AI and the expanding exploratory fields of neuroscience and quantum physics, the possibility of new scientific breakthroughs explaining how the

informational energies of the body affect behavior and health seem to be upcoming, with sound healing having a role.

According to the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) and its teachings, there are certain glands, plexuses, and organs in the human body that have psychic counterparts that make up twelve psychic centers. The goal of developing a connection with the psychic centers is harmonious living and evolution on the spiritual path. Seven of these centers are considered major and are termed: pineal gland, pituitary gland, thyroid gland, thymus, heart, solar plexus, and adrenal glands. The mystical methods for developing these centers include the intonation of specific vowel sounds on a particular note or pitch.

Rosicrucian healing systems deal with the electrical, magnetic, and psychic natures of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) of the autonomic nervous system of the body. The mind of the mystic, through visualization, can direct the healing energies within the body and to the world without the need for external applications. Studies conducted by George Buletza and his team in the 1970s and 1980s have demonstrated the efficacy of Rosicrucian distance healing and sound intonations.²

In the Esoteric Tradition, the practice of mindfulness reveals the mind-body connection. Western mysticism has not fully explored how gong baths, which can promote mindfulness, are an alternative healing modality. Mindfulness is worthy of exploration; the striking of the gong in ritual brings consciousness to awareness of the present moment and calls us out of a “sleep state” so that we are “mindful” in the moment. This use of gongs within ritual practice (whether in Rosicrucian or in others) and healing modalities deserve more attention and scientific validation. Hence, the exploration of this subject within this paper.

The Effect of Vibrational Sound at a Cellular Level

The five brainwave frequencies³ are:

1. Gamma waves: 40 Hz to 100 Hz (Highest) High-level information processing and cognitive functioning.
2. Beta Waves: 12 Hz to 40 Hz (High) Active, alert, and focused thinking.
3. Alpha Waves: 8 Hz to 12 Hz (Moderate) Calm, relaxed, and awake but not actively thinking.
4. Theta Waves: 4 Hz to 8 Hz (Slow) Deep relaxation, meditation, creativity, or light sleep.
5. Delta Waves: 0 Hz to 4 Hz (Slowest) Deep, dreamless sleep and healing states.

Parts of the brain work in tandem with each other. A note or pitch has a position in the complete range of sounds in the musical scale and stimulates the auditory stimuli in waves. Longer wavelengths produce lower frequencies, and shorter wavelengths, higher frequencies.⁴ Brain waves or the generation of oscillations of electrical activity by neurons in the brain produce different frequencies. Lower frequencies have been shown to regulate higher frequencies.⁵ Both low frequencies and high frequencies have been shown to affect brain activity. For example, in the case of low frequency beta waves, the brain consciously switches between different pieces of information, acting as a gateway for determining what information to clear out or not.⁶

Fabien Maman is one of the world's leading experts on vibrational sound. In the early 1980s, he conducted pioneering sound-cellular biology experiments at the University of Jussieu in Paris, showing the impacts of acoustic sound on human cells and their energy fields. Maman's research photographically documented, for the first time under a microscope, that acoustic sound can revitalize human healthy cells and destroy cancer cells. He also found that healthy cells changed shape and color according to the pitch and timbre of each note, and that when cells felt a "vibratory affinity" with a certain note, the cells' aura transformed into a mandala shape of vibrant color, such as pink and blue.⁷

The *American Physical Society Review* (2024) reported findings on the existence of vibration modes of a cell that was accomplished by attaching a single living cell to the surface of a microcantilever-like resonator under physiological conditions. The results indicated that "fixation-induced stiffening of the cell shifts the bending resonance frequency of the cell to frequencies higher than that of the first torsional vibration mode of the cantilever."⁸ In other words, this experimental result shows that frequencies directly affect the body at a cellular level. Resonance occurs when the frequency of a vibrating object causes a second object to vibrate at a higher amplitude of the same note.⁹ Therefore, when a gong is sounded and the cells resonate, this happens without the control of the reasoning mind.

Method and Effect of Gong Baths

Gongs, unless particularly tuned, produce a wide range of frequencies: overtones, undertones, octaves, and harmonics. Specific tones can stimulate the body's cells to vibrate at a molecular level to their optimal frequencies; this stimulation could result in stress reduction, improved sleep, enhanced mood, and emotional well-being.¹⁰

A gong bath, as a passive form of sound therapy, is one in which the participants sit or lie down comfortably with blankets and pillows and immerse themselves in the healing vibrations of sounds produced when the gong is tapped with a mallet by a facilitator. It could last from about forty-five minutes to two hours. A gong bath can also be performed alone at home.¹¹ Other instruments along with multiple gongs are often used to provide a fully immersive experience.

Gong master Don Conreux is seen by many as the creator of the "gong bath" during the early 1970s based on his training by master Yogi Bhanjan: "Conreux uses the term 'transvolution' to describe the quantum leaping [of] consciousness that allows the participants to leave behind their limited parameters and transit from peak to more sublime experiences. Through deep relaxation, the gong induces a process of shifting into the super-consciousness state or an instantaneous *samadhi*"¹² or illumination, also called Cosmic Consciousness in the Western Esoteric Tradition.

The gong is thus traditionally associated with the vowel sound OM. OM is believed to be the vibration from which all existence emerged. It is considered a sacred spiritual tool for aligning with Divine Consciousness and finding inner peace. It is a sacred sound in Hinduism, Buddhism, and many other spiritual traditions.¹³ When a person vibrates with OM in a sound bath, the distinction between the self or ego and the external world could disappear.

How Sound Therapy Enables the Mind-Body Connection

In a narrative study undertaken titled “Possible Mechanisms for the Effects of Sound Vibration on Human Health,” authors Lee Bartel and Abdullah Mosabbir (2021) found that the clinical profession of music therapy has only been around for about seventy-five years. They emphasize that sound and mechanical vibrations are the same thing and report that sound vibrations affect the body in two ways: (1) through basic structures, in other words, cells, muscles, and bones and (2) through the brain, neurologically.¹⁴

Bartel and Mosabbir also report that people respond to sound vibration based on the cultural music they grew up with. However, in neural rehabilitation, sound as vibration activates neural circuits and functions. Non-sound Vagus nerve stimulation is already practiced in clinical settings. Low frequency sound vibration has been found at times to stimulate “neurite outgrowth and neuronal differentiation,” through the Vagus nerve. The Vagus nerve, in the process of transmitting sensory information from most of the body to the brain, releases the neurotransmitter acetylcholine.¹⁵ The low frequency vibrations of sound baths then have a direct biological effect on the body by affecting the Vagus nerve, which, by influencing the nerves and brain, can affect the mind and emotions in terms of the relaxation response.

Ralph M. Lewis, former Emperor of AMORC, wrote that Divine knowledge is dormant within us. Self-inquiry awakens it, and this awakening can result in a person being able to recollect impressions which are often dreamlike.¹⁶ He points out that the Relative Theory of the Mind does not acknowledge the Divine aspect of humans. It claims that the mind consists of the nervous system, brain, body, environment, and “the atomic world that acts upon us,”¹⁷ a state of receptivity which is referred to as consciousness. In living things with complex nervous systems, the highest form of this receptivity is self-consciousness, where Self is the Knower that knows it knows.

The Rosicrucian viewpoint is that intuitive knowledge, emotionally satisfying and gratifying to the reasoning mind, that which comes into the consciousness, unreasoned or without great thought, is derived from one’s Inner or True Self, also called the Master Within, a portal to Divine Consciousness. Intuitive knowledge is obtained by turning the objective mind within and attuning with one’s psychic self. A person’s inner psychic or intuitive self is part of the great Universal Essence, the Cosmic Intelligence, and the rhythmic order of the universe. Intuitions received from the Cosmic pass into the objective mind and to the brain, and organize themselves within the objective mind according to ideas that the person already has.¹⁸ Sound healing, therefore, by enabling a state of psychically originated mindfulness, brings Divine energy into one’s mind and emotions, in turn interacting with the body’s cells.

The Gong as a Healing Instrument

Sound affects the vibratory nature of all living matter. Sound used in healing has been proven by modern science and practical application. Music therapy, through the use of sound, is the clinical use of music to heal the body, emotions, intellect, and societal relationships.

In an article for the *Stanford Medicine Magazine*, Hanae Armitage reported on the findings of the investigation of how acoustics position heart cells. The “nuances of noise and the power of acoustics to generate inventive, if not unexpected, technologies . . . show just how potent the combination of sound and science can be.”¹⁹ Acoustics examine sound waves, frequency, amplitude and timbre, and “[i]n music, acoustics explain why certain combinations of notes sound pleasing (harmony) or unpleasant (dissonance), and how sound interacts with spaces and materials.”²⁰

The use of gongs goes back thousands of years to the East and Far East, as part of cultural and spiritual life. Gongs come in different types. Their sound waves stimulate the dermatomes on the skin, causing the body to vibrate, affecting the nervous system and balancing the activity of various glands.²¹ “Dermatomes are areas of skin that send signals to the brain through the spinal nerves. The dermatome system covers the entire body from the hands and fingers to the feet and toes.”²²

According to authors Albinca Pesek and Tomaž Bratina in an article for the *Musicological Annual*, frequencies affect our bodies positively and some negatively. Pesek and Bratina describe how in the meditative state, enabled in a gong bath, the mind relaxes and its contents are loosened up, causing the sounds to pass through various states of consciousness into the unconscious. Gong baths that follow prescribed therapeutic protocols can be done for an individual or a group, positively affecting psychophysical well-being.²³

Gong Vibrations Travel Through the Body and Shape Living Matter to Affect Well-being

In a paper on the effects of sound on matter in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, authors Daniela Valenti and Anna Atlante (2024) write: “Vibration and sound are the shaping matrix of the entire universe.”²⁴

Sound spreads in the form of pressure waves in the air. When these waves come upon something other than air, they cause oscillatory motions in the object and create vibrations. Sound travels at different speeds in different mediums, an effect which determines if there is an amplification or reduction of energy. Sound transfers through the water element in bodies faster than through air.

The water element makes up almost three quarters of our cellular structure, and the mitochondria in our cells are commonly referred to as the “power houses” that transform one type of energy into another useful to the body. Authors Valenti and Atlante further explain that mitochondria in cells can also sense and transduce the energy of sound vibrations, that is, such energy is converted into another form of biological or chemical energy, and that, in turn, our cells produce their own sound vibrations.²⁵ Valenti and Atlante conclude that disease or good health could be determined by the state of the sound, or in other words, the vibratory state of the cells.²⁶ This recent molecular research lends support for the argument in favour of sound and music therapy.

The intensification and enriching of a musical tone by supplementary vibration is called resonance. Each part of the body has its own resonance. The basic property of objects comes from the intricate vibrational structure that manifests in nature, and through measuring instruments, this structure is perceived as subatomic particles. Stressed or diseased body parts do

not produce the correct sound wave and when the frequency is detuned, Valenti and Atlante suggest disease manifests.²⁷ The matrix of the entire universe is vibration, and sound therapy, as a complex form of information energy, resonates with it, causing the energy to reflect back into the body.²⁸

The Activation of the Parasympathetic Nervous System During Gong Baths

In a narrative paper on gong therapy used to help emotionally heal women after miscarriage (spontaneous loss of a fetus without any intervention), author Alexandra Sajko writes: “The sound and vibrations (tones) created by the gong reach the physical body through the ears but also the whole skin through the dermatomes, vibrating all the cells, bones, and organs.”²⁹ Sajko goes on to say, “The vibrations then affect the parasympathetic nervous system then the brain, changing its wave patterns within 90 seconds and opening the meditative space. The tones of the gong move people from an awake (beta) state to a more relaxed calm (alpha) state and then onto a restful state (theta) and finally to a deeply relaxing meditative (delta) state.”³⁰

In a paper titled “Neuroanatomy, Parasympathetic Nervous System” for the National Center for Biotechnology Information, authors Jacob Tindle and Prasanna Tadi write that the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) is structured and functions as follows:

Those preganglionic parasympathetic neurons that begin in the brainstem leave the central nervous system (CNS) through cranial nerves. Cranial nerves carrying parasympathetic functions include the vagus nerve acting on the viscera of the abdomen and thorax. The vagus nerve carries 75% of all parasympathetic fibers.³¹

In another paper titled “Autonomic Dysfunction” for the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the authors write about the malfunctioning of the autonomic nervous system affecting health. The (PNS) is part of the autonomic nervous system. Some of the illnesses that manifest due to PNS dysfunction are gastrointestinal issues, urinary retention, sexual dysfunction, etc.³² Since, according to author Alexandra Sajko, gong therapy activates the PNS, then it follows that this activation could be beneficial for PNS diseases caused by autonomic dysfunction.

In AMORC’s teachings, the human body is connected to a psychic body that exists in nine planes. In a *Rosicrucian Digest* article from July 1980 titled “The Nine Planes of Psychic Harmony,” George F. Buletza and Richard A. Rawson discuss how humans have seven major psychic centers which are energetically related to the physical body. For example, the fourth psychic plane engages the vagus inferior cervical ganglion (VICG) of the nervous system, which is the hormonal/glandular counterpart of the thymus gland. In the body it is responsible for body rhythm, integration, and circulation of the Vital Life Force or Cosmic Essence that animates us. The mental counterpart accounts for self-preservation, the Vital Life Force, balance, and the chalice of transmutation (an alchemical stage). The psychic counterpart of this fourth plane is the heart center, which governs love, compassion, and emotional balance. Through the process of refinement and reintegration, this exploratory stage is transcended to the fifth center, the throat/thyroid center which governs creative expression, devotion, and idealism.³³ The VICG is

parasympathetic in nature, and therefore gong baths, by affecting the PNS, could play a role in facilitating spiritual transmutation.

Sound Therapy Causing Brainwave Entrainment, Influencing the Heart Center

Author Gabriel Dalexander writes in “What Is Brainwave Entrainment?” for *My Brain Rewired* that a gong bath induces the alpha and theta states in the brain. What affects the brain also affects the heart and vice versa. Brainwave entrainment is the study of how specific frequencies of sound and light influence brain waves resulting in different states of consciousness.³⁴

Science is still probing, but healing practices that cause deep relaxation have been known to release emotional tension, thus enabling the recipient to deal with unresolved trauma. Deep relaxation and mindfulness are created during the process of healing the body with sound therapy, and, as indicated, gong therapy in particular. Such an experience can be emotionally intense. To get positive results, for the average person, it is better to work with a professional.³⁵ According to the Cleveland Clinic (established in 1921), a sound bath should be considered a complementary medical treatment similar to meditation, yoga, and tai chi. Similar to a yoga teacher, sound bath practitioners go through formal training and are certified through a certification process.³⁶

According to BrainTap, a website offering a neuropsychological method that claims to enhance mental health, the brain is stimulated into a specific state by using rhythmic stimuli, one being the use of beats and tones. “Embedded tones emulate relaxed brain waves, guiding the brain to an extraordinary level of focus and performance that would otherwise take years of practice to achieve.”³⁷ As indicated by Dalexander, what affects the brain affects the heart.

Research by the Heart Math Institute has found the following:

[c]ommunication between the heart and brain actually is a dynamic, ongoing, two-way dialogue, with each organ continuously influencing the other’s function. Research has shown that the heart communicates to the brain in four major ways: neurologically (through the transmission of nerve impulses), biochemically (via hormones and neurotransmitters), biophysically (through pressure waves) and energetically (through electromagnetic field interactions). Communication along all these conduits significantly affects the brain’s activity.³⁸

This research supports the findings of Gabriel Dalexander concerning the brainwave entrainment that happens during gong baths.

According to the Heart Math Institute, the heart produces the most electromagnetism in the human body measured with an electrocardiogram. The magnetic field generated can be detected up to three feet away with a SQUID-based magnetometer.³⁹ “A SQUID (superconducting quantum interference device) is a magnetometer with ultra-high sensitivity that is utilized to measure extremely subtle magnetic fields.”⁴⁰

Taking the study of brainwave entrainment and its effects on consciousness into consideration and the aforementioned research of author Alexandra Sajko about the restful state induced during gong therapy and that restful states influence the energetic conditions of the mind and emotions, transmutation to higher states of consciousness could be possible. Considering the energetic imprint of the three-foot magnetic field generated by the heart, and according to the aforementioned *Rosicrucian Digest* article that the psychic heart center is also an energetic field, it is probable that inducing higher states of consciousness would allow for greater creativity, devotion, and idealism.

Binaural Beats Generated by a Gong Bath Synchronize Both Hemispheres of the Brain

A fundamental frequency of a gong strike could produce many intricate acoustic sounds like overtones, harmonic tones, resonance and different beat frequencies. Many of these sounds occur simultaneously. According to gong instructor Tony Nec, many of the effects produced depend on the type of gong, the striking force, striking sequence, striking rhythm, gong position, player position, type of mallet and the surrounding space and walls.⁴¹ These emanations may help in synchronizing both sides of the brain hemispheres, the left (logical) and the right (creative).

In their research article “Gong and Its Therapeutic Meaning,” Albinca Pesek and Tomaž Bratina write that “the brain transforms two tones that slightly differ in their frequencies, when listened to simultaneously, into a third, fictitious tone,”⁴² called a binaural beat. To explain how this could happen, “if a frequency of 350 Hz is fed to the left ear and 360 Hz to the right ear, the brain will perceive the 10 Hz difference and hear a tone that does not really exist. The brain will start resonating at a frequency of 10 Hz, which is characteristic of the alpha range.”⁴³ Through the use of an electroencephalogram, it was found that in this alpha range the brain hemispheres were equalized and vibrated at 10 Hz. In the alpha state creativity and healing is possible.⁴⁴ Gongs properly sounded in gong baths produce many frequencies simultaneously and subsequently could synchronize the brain hemispheres.

Psychological research for the National Center for Biotechnology Information using fourteen studies on the effects of binaural beats on brain hemisphere synchronicity and brain oscillatory activity suggested the need for more systematic discourse and standardization of study methods. The binaural beat hypothesis suggests that external sounds of a particular frequency cause the brain’s electro-cortical activity to oscillate at the same frequency, but when two tones of different frequencies are introduced, a third tone of a different frequency can be heard—a binaural beat. Since binaural beats do not occur in natural settings, specific electroencephalography frequencies plus cognitive processing, meditation, and relaxation, etc. are used to study this psychological phenomenon.⁴⁵ The sources for this research were empirically inconsistent on several fronts, but all the studies chosen similarly implemented the beats, the experiments’ designs, the electroencephalography parameters and analyses.⁴⁶ Future study will obviously need to capture the great complexity of resonance and tones generated by a sound bath on binaural beats in order to come to an empirical conclusion. Albinca Pesek and Tomaž Bratina mention that these tones are used by providers in therapeutic settings and also are sold as products for relaxation.⁴⁷

Frequencies Emanated through Gong Healing Techniques Produce Spiritual and Universal Harmony

In the article “Why Is Music Good for the Brain?” Andrew E. Budson explains how music activates almost all of the brain and its networks, including the networks connected with “well-being, learning, cognitive function, quality of life, and happiness.”⁴⁸ Sound healing modalities where gongs and other resonant instruments offer an immersive experience are said to cleanse the mind, body, and soul.

Author Douglas Youvan, in an article titled “The Cosmic Symphony: Exploring Music as an Emergent Phenomenon from the Fabric of the Universe,” writes that through synchronicity, “music can have measurable effects on physiological processes.” This synchronization, used in therapy, can assist in pain management, depression and much more. Additionally, when memory is stimulated and cognitive functions are evoked, the brain can go beyond “language and traditional therapeutic methods.”⁴⁹

Exploration from a pantheistic point of view on the phenomenon of how music as cosmic symphony comes from the fabric of the universe by mirroring natural cosmic rhythms allows for spiritual connectivity and healing. This view aligns with science that suggests all of existence vibrates. Vibrations cause resonance and create patterns that mirror music. These particular scientific insights, as Youvan suggests, come from string theory in physics, quantum mechanics, the vibrations of electromagnetic fields, and space-time as described by general relativity.⁵⁰

The universe, the planets, and the stars also have a natural harmony and resonance with specific frequencies. The fact that the “spiral structure of DNA mirrors the spiral patterns seen in galaxies, shells, and waves”⁵¹ suggests a harmony that connects the microcosm with the macrocosm. Music could be considered an audible manifestation of the universe and its Divine Essence. To understand how music connects the physical and spiritual, one needs to view the universe as a giant resonant body with divine immanence in sound. The universe could be viewed both as the performer and the instrument.⁵²

The act of making music, from the sound of a bird to a symphony concert, is a sacred process. In the beliefs of many spiritual traditions, the vibrations of sounds, chants, and musical tones are spiritual energies connecting people to Divinity. An example is Tibetan singing bowls. The music is physics, which the brain interprets in consciousness, making the sounds heard, felt and understood by the soul. The soul could be considered as “individual” but part of the larger Universal Consciousness that is in all things with music being a bridge to the deeper states of existence.⁵³

Music also has a biochemical response in the body when emotions are evoked. Music “reflects the harmonious convergence of physical laws, human consciousness, and the deeper, spiritual dimensions of the Universe.”⁵⁴

The Relaxation Response and Emotional Balance from Gong Baths Might Form New Neural Connections

A literature review by Elizabeth Stegemöller in the *Journal of Music Therapy* of a neuroplastic model of music revealed that music therapy is a powerful tool to enhance neuroplasticity in the brain:

Neuroplasticity at all levels not only refers to emergence of new neuronal connections, but also the pruning of neuronal connections. Much like in music where it is the relative relationship between sound and silence that determines the overall perception and response to the music; in neuroplasticity the connectivity and non-connectivity of neurons, networks, and regions also determines the perception and response to stimuli in the world around us.⁵⁵

As Elizabeth Stegemöller points out in “Exploring a Neuroplasticity Model of Music Therapy,” noise can negatively affect neuroplasticity through increasing stress; however, music most likely promotes neuroplasticity in the human brain due to the acoustic structure of the music that creates resonance in brain cells, a process that enhances neuronal connections.⁵⁶ The level of connection in the network can change based on how neurons are inhibited or excited.⁵⁷

Neuroimaging studies have revealed that one of the effects of listening to music is that it may stimulate the same neural network as that involved in reinforcement, learning, and reward.⁵⁸ Dopamine is the neurotransmitter in the brain that is involved in motivation and reward-seeking behavior and thus, according to Stegemöller, reveals the “potential of music when applied therapeutically to facilitate neuroplasticity.”⁵⁹

Thus, professionally trained music therapists may be able to optimize the resonance of the instrumental sound on a patient to foster the goal in music therapy to increase “appropriate emotional expression through assisted music composition.”⁶⁰

In this review, the model is theoretical, but it is suggested that music therapy works due to the increase in dopamine and neural synchrony, and these effects may explain why new neural connections are formed.⁶¹ Gong baths have the potential, if practiced in music therapy, to produce similar results.

An Anecdotal Report on the Psychic Effects of Gong Baths

According to the Palmaia Spa Wellness Resort’s website, psychic effects are better explained through spiritual experiences. In 2023, according to practitioners at this successful holistic spa that included gong baths in its practice, participants often reported stress reduction, release of pent-up emotions, deep relaxation, and meditative states that can enable profound insights and exploration of the inner self. Such heightened mindfulness has impacts beyond the sessions, including the ability to maintain focus and manage stress.⁶² In a gong bath, it is speculated that the symphony of sound penetrates the mind and body and balances the psychic energy centers. The harmonization of the energy centers encourages energy to flow freely throughout the body.⁶³

Material Used in Gongs and Tibetan Singing Bowls Relates to Psychic and Alchemical Lore

The most common materials used in gong manufacturing are bronze, brass, and copper alloys. These materials are chosen for their unique sound qualities and durability. Brass alloys are made up of copper, tin, and zinc. Bronze alloys are made of copper, tin, and other metals.⁶⁴

According to *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, the Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis (the Emerald Tablet of Hermes) states that copper and tin are both among the seven metals associated with the seven major planets. Copper is associated with the planet Venus and the color green.⁶⁵ Tin is associated with the planet Jupiter and the color blue. Therefore, copper and tin, used in gong manufacture,⁶⁶ and in gong therapy, mystically belong to the primal order of the universe through frequency attunement among the planets and metals.

An instrument often used in sound therapy is the Tibetan singing bowl. Tibetan singing bowls are hand hammered and are typically an alloy made of seven metals.⁶⁷ Each metal used in the alloys is listed in the Emerald Tablet as a major primal force of the universe: lead (Saturn/black), tin (Jupiter/blue), iron (Mars/red), copper (Venus/green), mercury (Mercury/gray), silver (Moon/silver color), and gold (Sun/gold color).⁶⁸

This correspondence between Alchemical and Eastern Esoteric Traditions suggests that some instruments used in sound therapy, like gongs, have their roots in the depths of time immemorial and show a clear universal connection between East and West, much to the satisfaction of any serious metaphysician. In a relative manner, the use of these instruments presents opportunities to transcend to the higher realms of consciousness.

Conclusion

To prove the effectiveness of sound therapy and especially gong therapy, it is in some cases necessary to step outside the boundaries of evidence-based medicine. As mentioned in the introduction, in the nano world of quantum theories, boundaries seem to dissipate. The complexity of multiple co-existent states is still problematic for the empirical world. Explaining sound healing theory and its interaction with the energetic field of the body faces the same uncertainty. As author Douglas Youvan points out, the scientific insight that suggests all of existence vibrates partly comes from quantum physics. Science knows that the non-classical correlations of quantum entanglement, although mainly theoretical, are put into practice as they perform the modern cryptographic tasks that enable secure transmission in the encryption and decryption of online data information. How sound affects the energy field of the body is a focus of some practices, despite remaining theoretical.

How coherence and resonance relate to human consciousness and awareness are still largely theoretical in neuroscience. All conscious humans can discern they are conscious. Science has benefited us greatly, and a marriage between science and mysticism may not yet be possible for this subject. Hopefully, however, the use and further understanding of sacred sound could help bridge that gap enough to enable better health, increased mind power, and a more resilient happiness.

- ²³ Pesek and Bratina, “Gong and Its Therapeutic Meaning.”
- ²⁴ Daniela Valenti and Anna Atlante, “Sound Matrix Shaping of Living Matter: From Macrosystems to Cell Microenvironment, Where Mitochondria Act as Energy Portals in Detecting and Processing Sound Vibrations,” *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* (2024), <https://www.mdpi.com/1422-0067/25/13/6841>.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Alexandra Sajko, “Benefits of Gong Therapy on Miscarriage Grief and Its Psychological and Emotional Consequences.”
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Jacob Tindle and Prasanna Tadi, “Neuroanatomy, Parasympathetic Nervous System,” National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information (2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553141/>.
- ³² Juan Carlos Sánchez-Manso, Rahul Gujarathi, and Matthew Varacallo, “Autonomic Dysfunction,” National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information (2023), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430888/>.
- ³³ George F. Buletza, Jr. and Richard A. Rawson, “The Nine Planes of Psychic Harmony,” *Rosicrucian Digest* (July, 1980), 22-25, https://b45e1c3778bbf3eb96c-637cca54df3fd347e9c3d5d35c2f839a.ssl.cf5.rackcdn.com/Rosicrucian_Digest_v58_n7_1980_OCR.pdf.
- ³⁴ Gabriel Dalexander, “What Is Brainwave Entrainment?” *My Brain Rewired* (2023), <https://mybrainrewired.com/theta-waves/what-is-brainwave-entrainment/>.
- ³⁵ Gupta, Sanjana, “Does Sound Healing Actually Work?” *Very Well Mind* (2023), <https://www.verywellmind.com/sound-healing-for-self-care-8384146>.
- ³⁶ Cleveland Clinic, “What is a Sound Bath?” *Health Essentials* (November 29, 2022), <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sound-bath>.
- ³⁷ “The Science Behind BrainTap: How Brainwave Entrainment Enhances Mental Health,” *BrainTap* n.d., <https://braintap.com/the-science-behind-braintap-how-brainwave-entrainment-enhances-mental-health>.
- ³⁸ Heart Math Institute, “Science of the Heart, Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance,” Chapter 1 in *Heart Brain Communication*, <https://www.heartmath.org/research/science-of-the-heart/heart-brain-communication/>.
- ³⁹ Heart Math Institute, “Science of the Heart, Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance,” Chapter 6 in *Energetic Communication*, <https://www.heartmath.org/research/science-of-the-heart/energetic-communication/>.
- ⁴⁰ “What is a SQUID (Device)?” R. Grössinger Sato, “Magnetic Measurements: Quasistatic and ac” in *Encyclopedia of Materials: Science and Technology* (2001), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/materials-science/squid-device>.
- ⁴¹ Tony Nec, “Sound Healing – How to Play Gongs,” *Sound Healing Academy* (2016), <https://colourofsound.org/sound-healing-how-to-play-gongs/?form=MG0AV3>.
- ⁴² Pesek and Bratina, “Gong and Its Therapeutic Meaning”: 140.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ruth Maria Ingendoh, Ella S Posny, and Angela Heine, “Binaural Beats to Entrain the Brain? A Systematic Review of the Effects of Binaural Beat Stimulation on Brain Oscillatory Activity, and the Implications for Psychological Research and Intervention,” National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information (2023), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10198548/>.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Pesek and Bratina, “Gong and Its Therapeutic Meaning”: 140-141.
- ⁴⁸ L. Andrew E. Budson, “Why is Music Good for the Brain?” *Harvard Health Publishing* (2020), <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/why-is-music-good-for-the-brain-2020100721062?form=MG0AV3>.
- ⁴⁹ Douglas Youvan, “The Cosmic Symphony: Exploring Music as an Emergent Phenomenon from the Fabric of the Universe” (2024), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384081525_The_Cosmic_Symphony_Exploring_Music_as_an_Emergent_Phenomenon_from_the_Fabric_of_the_Universe.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Stegemöller, “Exploring a Neuroplasticity Model of Music Therapy,” *Journal of Music Therapy* (2014), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25316915/>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Palmaia - The House of AiA “Gong Baths: A Pathway to Relaxation” (December 29, 2023), <https://thehouseofaia.com/gong-baths-a-pathway-to-relaxation/>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Gong Manufacturing Techniques: From Bronze to Brass and Copper Alloys,” *The Sound Artist* (June 4, 2024), <https://thesoundartist.com/blogs/news/gong-manufacturing-techniques-from-bronze-to-brass-and-copper-alloys>.

⁶⁵ “*Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*” in *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries* Book 1: 15 (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Mystical Order *Rosae Crucis*), <https://www.rosicrucian.org/secret-symbols-of-the-rosicrucians>.

⁶⁶ “Difference Between Copper, Brass and Bronze,” *Metal Supermarkets* (April 21, 2015), <https://www.metalsupermarkets.com/difference-between-copper-brass-bronze/>.

⁶⁷ “Complete Singing Bowl Guide – What to Look for and How to Use Them,” *Spiritual Greatness*, <https://spiritualgreatness.com/singing-bowl-guide/>.

⁶⁸ “*Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*.”