

Ancient Frequencies:

The Indigenous use of Music & Sound for healing around the World.

Since time immemorial throughout the world, all peoples have known of the power of sound and music for healing the mind, body, Soul, & emotions.

All people can trace their Ancestry back to a time when these ways were common, and many Indigenous people still practice these healing modalities today.

The voice and drums are often used in order to go into trance in order to “journey to the otherworld”, in order to access healing through various means. Throughout the world, one can find commonality amongst diverse peoples in that, they all speak of an Upper, Middle, & Lower world. These can be described as collective inner planes of consciousness that actually exist.

The Upper world is where one travels to seek Visions and guidance, the middle world, (which is most like our world), is where one can find healing herbs, or communicate with someone over great distances (without our modern phone or internet). The Lower world is the world of the Ancestors, & spirit or animal guides. In the following article, I will discuss (briefly) a few of these peoples and some of their methods for healing through the power of sound. It is my intention here to illustrate that healing with sound has been used throughout time, right up to today.

Sound Healing among Native American/First Nations:

Cherokee (Tsalagi): According to Dhani Ywahoo, venerated Elder of the Sacred Cherokee Ywahoo Lineage, the most important aspect of wellbeing is the power of thought and voice. “The voice is our greatest medicine. The power of voice, song, and prayer has the ability to draw life force into the body so that a person can become whole”.

Navajo (Diné): in the Navajo culture, there are medicine men known as “singers”. When a person needs healing, first the singer diagnoses the problem. He then will provide the appropriate chanting prayer and instructions to restore harmony, health, balance, and beauty to the physically or spiritually sick person. Healing ceremonies may last several hours to several days. The singers, or medicine men, are highly regarded in Navajo society and apprentice for many years before being able to sing in the ceremonies (of which there are over 60).

Sound Healing in Africa:

!Kung: The !Kung tribe of Southern Africa’s Kalahari desert still use polyrhythmic singing to perform healing rituals that last all night. According to field research by Richard Katz of Harvard University, he once witnessed a healing ritual of this sort, where a man had been injured by lion and was bleeding profusely. Rather than trek for hours to the nearest hospital, the tribe conducted a ritual on his behalf. By sunrise, the bleeding stopped, the wounds closed over and were barely visible, after a circle of 20 or so healers sang, chanted, drummed and danced around him throughout the night.

Shona: A similar ritual, but with different instruments can also be found in Southern Africa, with the Shona people. They use an ancient instrument called the mbira: a type of a “deluxe thumb piano”, often with 24 or more keys. A “Bira” in an all night healing ceremony, where the Ancestors and Spirit Allies are invoked, and these ceremonies are often used to successfully heal people of physical and mental illness. Though the instruments, songs, & melodies change from place to place, these kinds of ceremonies can be found, in one form or another, throughout the continent.

Dagara: Amongst the Dagara of West Africa, the marimbas are used in various ceremonies, among them are the funeral rites, which often last several days. During these funeral rituals, specific songs are played to induce weeping, and the expression of grief. In fact, the Dagara even have regular grief rituals, whether some one has died or not, because they see the expression & release of grief as a very

important & regular part of village life, in order to maintain community health. Both Women and men weep during these rituals. Imagine how much healthier our society would be if we maintained regular grief rituals for all that we have suffered and lost!

Sound Healing in Ancient Europe:

As the music of the Greeks is well known, I will not discuss it here. Unfortunately many of the Ancient European Music has been lost, do to its demonization by the Church. But there are some vestiges of Europe's Indigenous past that can still be found, especially in the in frozen North.

Sami: The Sami, often known as "Laplanders" , although this term is seen as derogatory, are an ethnic group of far northern Europe, throughout Scandinavia and Western Russia. They are light skinned, & while they look much like Europeans, they are a bridge, in that they are more closely related to other indigenous people of the Arctic Circle.

Though most Sami have been forced into Christianity now, there still remain some holdouts of the old ways. The joik (pronounced: yoyk) is the name of the healing songs of the Sami. They are pentatonic in their structure. There are personal joiks, sung by an individual for themselves, and also specific joiks that were used in shamanic rituals. Flat drums were also used, very similarly to those used in Siberia (where the word shaman originates). As common to all other Indigenous People's, these drums were used in rituals to go into trance for healing, very similarly to Native Americans, and the sound is amazingly similar. Unfortunately, similarly to Native Americans, they were forced into Christianity, and 20% of people killed during the "witch trials" affected Sami people. Their children were forced into boarding schools, and in Sweden Sami women were sterilized under the auspices of a program that was in existence until 1975.

Hungarian: In Hungary there are some 108 clans, and the Bacsa clan is the clan of the shamans. Hungarian elder & shaman, Joska Sooks (born in 1921) recalls in his biography how the shamanic teacher he apprenticed with as a child, Tamas

Basci, as follows: “Tamas Basci healed people & animals by using singing without words. He only used sounds. Tamas Basci not only used herbs, but also worked with spiritual energies. He used to say, ‘I do not heal, I restore harmony’.”

This reminds me of the power of toning (which we often use in modern forms of sound healing in Western culture). Also, some find interesting the “sound-light beings” that Joska would see in his inner eye, and made many paintings of, before his passing in 2008 (RIP).

Hawaiian & Polynesian Islands:

Hawaiians have always used songs, or *mele* to restore balance to the body, mind, and spirit. Traditional Hawaiians see that to be whole and balanced is our natural state. All people are seen as lokahi (uniquely individual, yet one with all existence) and pono (in harmony, balance, and proper relationship with the spiritual and physical worlds). Songs are used, in conjunction with other traditional healing modalities, to restore lokahi and pono. This enables the flow of life force, or mana, to arise.

Australian Aborigine:

Aboriginal use of the yadiki (or didgeridoo) is now world famous. Few realize though, that this ancient and primordial instrument (estimated to be 40,000 years old or more) is used in traditional healing rituals. These rituals often extend throughout the night. The Didgeridoo has been used to heal broken bones, torn muscles, and all sorts of illnesses. Also, the traditional Aborigines are very connected to the earth, and sometimes went on “walk about” journeys playing the didgeridoo in key places known as “song lines” or on the ley lines of the earth to help to maintain the balance of life on Earth. Truly work like this is being a steward of our planet.

In conclusion, this brief paper is of course, only scraping the surface of the vastness and diversity of the peoples of the world, and their traditional uses of

sound for healing. I think there is a lot to learn and to be explored in the field of Sound Healing from our Indigenous Ancestors, and indigenous people in general. Many of these healing ways and secrets are only passed down through oral tradition, inherited through lineages whose cosmologies encompass the “whole person” (body, mind, emotions, Spirit, cosmos, & the Otherworld), not merely learned intellectually through books. This can make the Journey toward mastery of these ways elusive, and take a long time.

In Kemet (a.k.a. Ancient Egypt), for example, one had to be initiated in order to become a musician, and this process often took 21 years to accomplish. Though this may not be practical in today’s world, it is good to seek out a genuine teacher (ideally an elder) from the tradition one wishes to use, before implementing these ways of healings in ones personal practice. And when doing so, to remember that the reason for these traditions in the first place is for healing & to be of service to humanity. Not to “feel powerful” or “be a shaman” as this is the path of ego, and will eventually lead to ones undoing every time as demonstrated by “The Secret” author James Earl Ray, when he was arrested for manslaughter after “playing shaman” and leading a sweat lodge ceremony without proper guidance. If one feels drawn to utilize these modalities, it is important to always give honor & respect to those people & cultures that brought them forth in the first place. Not only because these healing traditions can be useful to us personally, but also because without these Ancestors, and their healing wisdom, none of us would be here today.

The field of sound healing is both Ancient, as well as modern. May we use the ways of the past that have worked well, combined with the best technology of today to create a new and balanced future.