

The Music of Sound

Written by Katherine Tandy Brown

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So how're you doing with the pandemic these days now that our state is mostly open and "the numbers" are still rising... even here in our beloved Beaufort? Naively, many of us keep hoping that because we *want* this strange time to return to some semblance of normal after sheltering in place and *please* let us get back to life as we knew it "before," it will magically happen. But it seems that instead, new uncertainties keep arising.

The solutions to many of those are up to the individual. To wear a mask or not, to continue social distancing and implementing the six-foot rule, to attend a celebratory gathering, to scrub or sanitize those germ-laden hands, to board an airplane, to continue zoom-meeting for a while yet, et al. Add to that the larger questions of nature, pollution and global warming. Mother Earth was measurably happier in the early days that kept the majority of the world's population indoors. International maps revealed far-cleaner air surrounding cities. Spring appeared visibly greener. Birds flitted about, warbling seemingly brighter tunes at the tops of their tiny lungs. Human encounters with non-domesticated animals increased. As a lifetime nature-lover, I certainly don't want any of that to change. It's as if the earth stopped for a while to show mankind the possible glory of this planet, what could be a new, fresher habitat for us, *if* we come to attention, begin caring more and become involved in change.

At Woodstock, Santana vocalized a poignant message that can apply to mankind at this time in our lives: "You've got to change your evil ways... baby."

But what exactly could that look like? Who only knows? More big questions without concrete answers. New conundrums can arise daily, often ushering in even more anxiety and stress. I wish someone – Harry Potter, for instance – could wave a magic wand and create positive solutions for it all, but until the Great Pause bows out and the Time of Knowing appears, dealing with emotional ups and downs can at least help keep you on a more even, daily keel.

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Previously in this column, I've addressed stocking your emotional "tool belt" as a lift when you're a bit down, and also discussed the healing power of music. This particular iteration combines the two in the practical application of the use of a different approach to music as a powerful emotional tool. A two-in-one that packs a powerful punch to those day-to-day worrisome thoughts. Though solutions on a grand scale may be beyond our kin, at least we can face our days from a place of peace and surety created by our own inner work. The stronger you can build a peaceful countenance within, the easier your ability will become to face a stressful situation by responding to its reality instead of reacting emotionally, thus giving you choice in the matter.

The acoustical phenomenon of musical harmonics can facilitate this ideal state of being.

Basically, harmonics is the science of musical sound, and is also known as the harmonic series, or overtone series. All sounds are produced by vibrating bodies that send out waves. If a vibrating body is of an irregular constitution, such as a floor, hitting it will produce irregular waves known as "noise." Whereas, if the source of vibration is of a consistent structure, as is that of a musical instrument, we hear that vibration as a musical tone. In scientific terminology, harmonics is defined as "energy in vibratory motion."

For years, professional clarinetist and college-level music educator, Del Hungerford, has been fascinated by the healing capacities of music. "I always wondered what it was about music that affected people's emotions. For example, when people are sad, they listen to a certain type of music, but probably not the same music they'd listen to when in a good mood." So when researching music's healing capacities, she found materials written by scientists, music enthusiasts, performers and educators. The sheer array of interested types is extremely telling about the scope of this subject.

For our purposes, I'll offer a simple explanation and focus on how all this applies to the healing properties of music and in particular, how music can help soothe – or at least afford the opportunity to a clearer perspective on – timely issues. Those include isolation, which is currently accounting for a significant number of deaths among the elderly; loss, temporary or chronic physical pain, depression, relationship issues, and the anxiety that can come about as a result of making major decisions, in particular those whose best answers may be unclear. Scientific studies have shown that a good set of tunes can also help improve your immune system.

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If you can identify with any of those issues, musical harmonics, or sound healing, is worth a try that might well bring you relief with no investment other than time.

First discovered during the time of Gregorian Chants, which would have begun in the ninth and tenth centuries, sound healing frequencies were found to connect with the human mind and body on a universal level. The theory purports that differing frequencies offer differing healing properties.

Here's the run-down of commonly-used frequencies and their properties:

396 hz – Releasing fear

417 hz – Initiating change

528 hertz (hz) – Healing frequency of love, also known as the Miracle Tone

639 hz – Healing relationships

741 hz – Finding creative and expressive solutions

852 hz – Linking you with your spirit and where you came from, spiritual homecoming

The really good news is that music of these varying frequencies is available on YouTube. Many of the videos for listening can last a number of hours, and the music can lull you into dreamland, where your subconscious can still pick up the frequencies and continue your journey as you snooze. For a most rewarding experience, listen through a good pair of headphones a number of times before deciding whether or not it's for you. Unlike medication, harmonic frequencies offer no negative side effects and at the least, will treat you to pure relaxation.

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Some schools of thought disagree with the theory that sound itself can promote healing. Harmonics does not purport to be music therapy as such, but is instead a viable alternative healing possibility that may help you get back to your center, i.e. back to the you that is creative, successful and comfortable in your own skin. You know, the one that you're on the earth to be. The one that may have recently discovered during this time of screeching to a halt, this time of unanticipated change, this time of the possibility of a great paradigm shift. When you're comfortable in your own skin, remarkable things can occur.

If at all possible, try not to jump back in to life too quickly. Listen to the wisdom of Mother Nature and of the earth. Listen to your heart and make informed choices.

Philosopher and artist Brian Andreas states it well. "It's hardest to be who you are if you did really well at who you're not."

Think about how things were, about who you were "before," and make a conscious decision about who you really want to be in your "after," and what you want that to look like. A bit of sound healing may help you clarify.