

Riley Rogers – Final Paper

The purpose of this paper is to introduce sound healers to unique, interesting, and uncommon instruments. This is to open minds to the idea that any instrument, and really anything that makes noise, can be used in sound healing if used in the proper way. So this is not only about the three instruments this will focus on, but also about the general idea of keeping an open mind and an open ear to all instruments and sounds in the field of sound healing! (It's not all about the bowls and forks!) A brief history and description of each instrument will be given, as well as information on tuning systems, scales, etc. that the instruments use and how they apply to what we have learned in the sound healing program and classes.

Hang

This first instrument is one you may or may not have already known about. Maybe you're even lucky enough to own one or something similar yourself. However it is pretty commonly known in this field because of its frequent use in meditation/new age/spiritual music. That's one of the reasons why I wanted talk about it and also because it is a fairly new instrument.

The Hang, commonly referred to as the Hang drum, was created in 2000. There is only one company on Earth that makes them in Switzerland, and unfortunately they no longer make them as of 2013 (so they could focus on their next new instrument). Although most call it a Hang drum, the creators prefer the term Hang.

The Hang is a metallic "UFO-shaped" instrument that rests on the lap when played. It is played by hitting/tapping one of the 7-8 notes that lay in a circle on the top of the Hang. Each note is tuned harmonically to the fundamental note in the center. This fundamental note is what the Hang is tuned to. Each Hang is unique in that they are all tuned to a specific key and scale that cannot be changed.

Here's a cool video of a guy giving a brief description of the instrument before playing it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsaTuyjS1Ic>

As you could hear in the video, the Hang has a very smooth and relaxing timbre to it yet it is very metallic as well as resonant, similar to a steel drum. While there are some overtones in the notes, the tones are a bit more pure and not as rich as a lot of common instruments. Each note has two harmonics, one an octave above the fundamental, and one a fifth above that octave, so it is a mix of odd and even harmonics.

This wonderful mix of timbres as well as the harmonic tuning systems and scales used (depending on the individual Hang and the context of its use) makes the Hang a great instrument for sound healing. To get more specific we would have to talk about specific hangs, what key and scale they are tuned to, and what it is being used on to heal. This is all very specific case-by-case information. However the Hang's use of fifths and octaves make it useful for a variety of things and great for sound healing in general.

As far as acquiring a Hang, because they are no longer in production, they can only be found used online for quite a price. However, the quickly rising popularity and attention of the Hang has brought about the supply and demand of a similar instrument called the Handpan. These are pretty much the same exact thing, just created without using the patented process, name, and materials that the makers of the Hang use. Some might say they don't sound quite as good as the original Hangs. These can be found in various online stores, sometimes in music and/or sound healing stores, and pretty much everywhere on craigslist and ebay. There are even cheaper (and noticeably worse sounding) versions called Handtanks made out of propane tanks, and you can even find tutorials on how to make your own.

Hurdy Gurdy

This next instrument, although much much older than the Hang, is probably actually less commonly known. It is probably also very rare that this instrument is used in sound healing, if at all, but I believe the potential is there.

That next instrument is the hurdy gurdy! A stringed instrument that is played by hand-turning a crank that turns a wheel that rubs against the strings causing them to resonate similar to a violin. The other hand plays a keyboard that presses wedges against the strings to change the pitch of the strings and get different notes. Most hurdy gurdys have 24 keys that cover the range of two chromatic octaves.

The hurdy gurdy is so old that its exact origins aren't quite known. It is believed to have originated from 11th century A.D. Europe or Middle East from fiddles. One of the earliest versions known is an instrument called the organistrum, which was used by the Byzantine Empire. It was so large that it requires two people to play it, one person to crank the wheel while another played the keyboard.

Here is a video of a guy playing a much more modern version of the hurdy gurdy. His is electric and so he is definitely using some effects and a looper to play on top of himself, but he is playing a hurdy gurdy nonetheless. He also uses it in some unique and interesting ways that I don't think most hurdy gurdys are traditionally meant to be played. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I67UexqArvY>

As you could hear, the instrument is rich in a lot of odd harmonics, yet it is still pleasant and enjoyable to listen to in a relaxed way. I think this makes the hurdy gurdy a great candidate for sound healing because the activating odd harmonics will allow the listener to release any blockages or stuck emotions without even realizing it. A lot of odd harmonic sounds, while very powerful and activating, can also be very discomforting or unpleasant. I think this could be a great workaround to that.

Also, like bagpipes and didgeridoos, the hurdy gurdy is a drone instrument, and another one of the reasons why I think it has the potential to be great for sound healing. Drone instruments are great for meditation and sound healing because the drone easily allows for focused yet relaxed attention and so it's a good way to "get in the zone" and easily go into a relaxed state that is optimal for healing.

While the earliest version of the instrument were commonly tuned to a Pythagorean scale, most modern day hurdy gurdys use equal tempered tuning so it can be played more easily with other instruments. However, the keys on the instrument have tangents and therefore can be tuned to any key or scale desired.

Because of its large mix of timbres, sounds, overtones, and general variety of sounds and ways it can be played, the hurdy gurdy is a very diverse instrument. This sets it apart from many instruments and it is capable of many things that other instruments are not capable of. These are the reasons why I find the hurdy gurdy so unique and interesting, and why I think it would be fitting in sound healing.

While uncommon, the hurdy gurdy is available in a multitude of stores, particularly online.

Peruvian/Incan Water/Wind Instruments

To those of you who may have been worrying about being less instrumentally capable and musically inclined, worry no more! These instruments are as easy to play as tuning forks! While perfect for sound healing, maybe the best candidate on this list, unfortunately these instruments are the least common and hardest to obtain, but ironically also the cheapest (from my personal research).

Here is a video of a man from Peru who is an expert on Peruvian/Incan water/wind instruments. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzoiL7x56Eo> He makes them himself and unfortunately he does not have an online store but if you are ever lucky enough to visit Peru you just might be able to find him selling his products in the Inca Museum in Cusco.

Because this man is the only producer of these instruments I could find, I do not know the history of these instruments. I only know that some of them may have been invented in ancient times by the Incans in Central and South America.

There are similar instruments that can be found online like bird whistles and such that use water in a similar fashion, but I had no luck in finding any that sounded as good as these ones do or imitate nature sounds as well as these ones do.

Obviously these instruments would be *perfect* for sound healing. They use a lot of odd harmonics, but they are masked in pleasant and soothing sounds, timbres, and overtones, making these instruments very powerful for activating and healing. Also the ability to be able to bring in natural and acoustic nature sounds into sound healing sessions would be ideal. Nature sounds are great for sound healing because they bring us back to our center and mother earth. They tune us into the natural harmony of nature, as well as simply relaxing us. These sounds used in a healing session can be extremely powerful. Besides, who doesn't love nature sounds!?

Hopefully you were introduced to some new instruments that you have never heard of before, and if not, hopefully you learned something new about them. Again though, the overall purpose of this is to introduce new ideas and ways of thinking about always being open to all sounds and instruments and ways to implement all these things into sound healing. As we have learned in class, there is no wrong or bad sound for sound healing, so always keep your ears open!