

# Sound Source

*Sonic reflections from Gary Diggins*

## Building Community Through Sounding

I watch the hospital auditorium as it swells with blue scrubs, white lab coats, pink smocks, and pin striped suits. Over two hundred curious participants pour into the space. Just as they may not know the difference between a djembe, ashiko, or tingsha (some of the many instruments I've laid out on the stage), neither can I tell who is a doctor, nurse, administrator, or volunteer.

*Play is a universal human act which fosters the spirit of imagination.*  
~ Paul Newham

I've been hired to unite this diverse configuration into a energized and inspired team. My challenge is to do so with a minimal amount of word and a maximum amount of sound. After a little guidance and encouragement, the room is quickly humming with a cooperative vibe. Not only can you feel the energy, you can also observe the effects of spirited communication. The president of the hospital passionately drums with a cafeteria employee. A chief surgeon grooves on a balafon next to a candy stripper on a cowbell.

I am privileged to witness scenes such as this each week. While a larger world wrestles with religious, political, ethnic, and ecological conflicts, my job underscores how (on the small scale) a spirit of synergy and empathy can be called up through participatory soundmaking. I am proud to be among

a growing number of facilitators who employ drum circles and sound rituals as a means of resolving conflicts, mediating accord, and promoting community.

Not that long ago, a newspaper reporter asked me why I thought men and women were increasingly drawn to gatherings where improvised drumming and singing are featured. My answer was to the point, knowing that it had to fit into a bite sized sentence. What I could have said, if space permitted, is that participatory musicmaking helps us moderns to...

- ♪ Step out of competitive behavior
- ♪ Step into cooperative conduct
- ♪ Enjoy sound's impressionistic language
- ♪ Liberate our primal emotions
- ♪ Embrace our masculine/feminine mix
- ♪ Learn how to befriend surprises
- ♪ Balance the roles of supporting and leading
- ♪ Enter non-ordinary states of consciousness
- ♪ Access cycles of gestation and creation
- ♪ Develop skills of attention and intention
- ♪ Release self-criticism and comparison
- ♪ Reframe the concepts of perfection/mistake
- ♪ Deepen our listening skills



- ♪ Drop down into our bodies
- ♪ Entrain to rhythms beyond our own
- ♪ Invite passion and intensity
- ♪ Appreciate the healing potential of sound
- ♪ Lose our regimented sense of time
- ♪ Play for the sake of play
- ♪ Explore our imaginal nature
- ♪ Regain a respect for ritual space
- ♪ Make sound as a meditation
- ♪ Experience the beauty of diversity
- ♪ Trust our intuitive abilities
- ♪ Respond to momentary shifts
- ♪ Disappear by allowing rather than trying
- ♪ Respect silence and space as much as sound
- ♪ Bridge control and abandonment
- ♪ Enjoy ourselves

(And yes... the list delightfully goes on *ad infinitum*...)

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