

## **Online meeting notes Tuesday 24th March**

### **Initiating the Session and Creating Space:**

Sara Teal transitioned the conversation to the session content, announcing they were starting the recording and encouraging participants to focus by “arriving into this space” together, even in an online environment. They led a brief practice of settling down, closing eyes, taking deep breaths, and allowing the body to be present despite external disruptions.

### **Review of Completed Training and Core Elements:**

Sara Teal reviewed the four completed main instrument days, noting that participants had at least completed three, each intentionally designed to provide a “felt experience”. The reviewed elements were: drum paired with rhythm (structure, pulse, organisation), bowls (expansion, resonance, harmonics), voice (expression, authenticity, connection), and gong (immersive and holding space). They explained that these elements are qualities that appear in everything, not fixed rules for specific instruments.

### **Elisha Collier’s Lack of Gong Experience:**

When asked about their experience with gongs, Elisha Collier revealed that they had never actually heard a gong, despite attending sound baths that featured bowls and drums. They mentioned having heard mixed reviews about gongs, with people either loving them or finding them quite jarring.

### **Handling Polarised Gong Responses as Practitioners:**

Sara Teal addressed the divided response to gongs, noting that a key challenge for practitioners is how to hold space when attendees realise they do not like gongs halfway through a session. They suggested that creating a safe space at the beginning is crucial for people’s nervous systems to handle the power of the gong, and practitioners might use disclaimers or think carefully about how they promote sessions.

### **Gong Practice and Safety Strategies:**

Sara Teal explained that they separated gong sessions from other sound instruments early on due to the polarised responses, aligning gongs with the New Moon and other instruments with the Full Moon. They also noted that while gongs have a place in clinical settings, this requires mastery in both playing and holding space, and they only use a small hand gong for one-to-one sessions, unless specifically requested, for deep, subtle shifting.

### **Addressing Client Anxiety After Bowl Session:**

Elisha Collier shared that one of their regular yoga therapy clients experienced anxiety after a short session with Himalayan bowls. Sara Teal suggested this sounded like a “classic case” where the client was opened up with the bowls and not properly brought back again, indicating a lack of grounding.

### **Connecting Gong Power to Yin and Yang:**

Sara Teal introduced the concept of yin and yang to discuss the power of gongs, describing them as significantly more intense than other instruments. Yin was described as slow, receptive,

internal, and dissolving, while Yang was active, dynamic, outward, and building. They used this framework as a familiar way to relate to movement, energy, and balance in sound work.

### **Yin, Yang, and Nervous System States:**

Sara Teal proposed that most people's nervous systems are often stuck in too much Yang energy. They explained that this is why sessions should begin slowly and safely (Yin). Rooted in Daoist philosophy, this approach emphasises balance and relationship—like day and night, sound and silence—rather than conflict between opposites.

### **Yin, Yang, and the Wisdom of the Body:**

Sara Teal related Yin energy to the wisdom felt in the body, contrasting it with the more dominant Yang-oriented, materialistic model. Elisha Collier linked this to the sympathetic (fight or flight/Yang) and parasympathetic (rest and digest/Yin) nervous system states, noting their work focuses on reconnecting people with their Yin.

### **The Washing Machine Analogy for Gong Bath Structure:**

Sara Teal shared an analogy for the structure of a gong bath, comparing it to a washing machine cycle. The process involves:

- **Striking** – quiet, rhythmic, opening the field
- **Rolling** – continuous, fast rhythm holding the sound
- **Swelling and Crescendo** – building to an apex for deep clearing

### **Friction Mallets and Deep Clearing:**

Sara Teal introduced friction mallets, which create unique sounds and act like “little hooks” to clear deeper layers after the crescendo has opened the system. The session then gradually returns to stillness, ensuring the body feels safe.

### **The Importance of Silence and Instrument History:**

Elisha Collier expressed a desire for silence in their practice, which Sara Teal interpreted as respect for the sound journey, where silence forms a significant portion of the experience. They also shared that gongs originate from regions such as China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar, historically used in ritual to mark thresholds and gather communities.

### **Preparations for Individual Sound Baths:**

Sara Teal outlined preparations for the upcoming individual sound baths. Participants were encouraged to consider how they might use their voice—through chanting, humming, or in the opening and closing. App suggestions were shared to support intuitive singing.

### **Grounding Practices and Client Anxiety:**

Sara Teal defined grounding as bringing awareness and energy back into the body so the nervous system feels safe. They explained that anxiety can arise when this step is missed, as sound can expand awareness, loosen stored energy, and shift brainwave states.

### **Tools and Structure for Grounding:**

Grounding tools include percussion instruments such as chimes, rattles, rain sticks, and

shakers. Wood-based instruments can provide contrast to metal sounds. Sara Teal recommended allowing at least seven minutes for grounding and clearly explaining this phase at the beginning of the session.

### **Opening Practices and Assessment Details:**

For opening a session, Sara Teal suggested practices such as breathwork, body scans, or short meditations to help participants arrive. The individual sound baths will be around 30 minutes, with feedback offered to help practitioners understand how their work lands in others' bodies.

### **Incorporating Movement at Closing:**

Simple movements such as wiggling fingers and toes, circling wrists, stretching, and turning onto the side were recommended to support integration and gently bring participants back.

### **Homework and Assessment Parameters:**

Participants were asked to begin planning their 30-minute sound journey, including instruments and timing. The task was framed as exploratory, with reassurance that no one would fail the assessment.

### **Reflection on Roles:**

Sara Teal clarified that the purpose of the session was for participants to reflect on their experiences as both receiver and facilitator.

### **Upcoming Tasks and Planning:**

Sara Teal noted they would be compiling and sending notes over the coming days.

### **Online Drumming Experiment:**

A future online drumming session was proposed to explore whether group drumming translates effectively in a virtual space.

### **Evaluating Online Activation:**

Sara Teal expressed interest in exploring whether participants still experience energetic activation online, despite potential sound distortion.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The session closed with warm acknowledgements and well wishes.