

# Healing you softly with his sound

BY FARHA SAIT



substitute for conventional medicine. My work neither competes with mainstream practice nor interferes with its course." It is a complementary alternative that is gaining increasing popularity across Europe.

We hear various sounds on a daily basis. But what de Back does in his sessions is teach you to feel those sounds. The feeling of sound can go deeper than the feel of a physical touch to help heal your pain and repair your defences. For a

sound message to be effective, one thing is important: The patient has to be open-minded and he must relax during the session. "I am not concerned with too much of his medical background or his biography. All I need is for the person to relax and take in the sound that I play," he says. In that sense what he does is much like a musician and his band, only this is not loud jarring sound, rather a very soothing rhythm.

For a typical session, de Back uses a 115cm Chinese gong, one pair of tingshaws and 16 large 'singing bowls' that will be arranged all around you with two bowls being placed on your body and caused to vibrate by using a mallet stick. These Himalayan bowls are composed of seven metals including gold, silver and copper.

The genre of sound therapy has long been known and practised within the vast realm of alternate medicine. However, de Back's contribution has been to develop the world's first sound massage by positing the two philosophies of inner harmony with external stimuli together to create a better state of mind and body.

But this discovery was not deliberated upon nor caused to happen by its exponent, "It just struck me, out of the blue," he states, recalling that day in college when as a student of psychotherapy he saw a colleague holding this large Tibetan bowl. One sound from it had the man hooked for life. "I can't explain it but I had just found my vocation," he says. In the years that followed he devised a methodology and a framework where none existed. "I had no predecessor, I went by instinct and patient feedback," he says.

Today, de Back has a dedicated following around the globe. Two of these being Vinay Nasta and Mala Jham of a Dubai-based alternate therapy centre, Serenity, who consider themselves lucky to have secured a few dates in his heavily booked calendar to conduct a workshop in Dubai. Last week he taught students at Serenity the art and skill of listening to the sounds of the singing bowl. That was just the first session, Hans de Back will be back in Dubai to conduct the remaining three sessions.

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Sceptics may scoff. And conventional medicine may be quick to brush aside its therapeutic credentials. But itinerant Dutchman Hans de Back swears by the wonders of a sound massage. He lives by it. He teaches the technique and has administered thousands of sound massages to ailing, stressed out, diseased people around the world.

You may find it uneasy, even a bit eerie, to lie still while he arranges those large Tibetan gold and silver metallic bowls around you and using a mallet stick plays melodic rhythms around you. There is no touch or any preparation involved. It is the vibrations that originate from within the hollow bowls that works to calm your inner self and balance the elements.

"You'll enjoy it," he says, ushering me in for a taste of the real thing.

Sure enough. It was calming, relaxing and kind of switches you off from the rat race.

"But that's not all it does," says the pioneer of this lesser known branch of acoustic therapy, currently on a visit to Dubai. Hans de Back plays a combination of bowls and gongs to soothe frayed nerves of the Dutch royalty, to help terminally ill cancer patients in hospitals, to calm the disabled, reduce the negative effects of stress, rid school students of exam phobia and even reduce blood sugar levels.

"But," he is quick to add, "a sound massage is not a



Hans de Back at work with his sound technique