

# GONGTOPIA

I've been playing percussion for most of my life and can't really remember a time I wasn't fascinated by it all. I've played all types of music—pop/rock/jazz/classical/country—but for some reason, I've always been more attracted to the fringe, things like improvisation and experimentation. While studying at University, I discovered African & Asian music, European free jazz, and avant-gardists like John Cage. From there I discovered Gongs and other ringing metals. There was no turning back...

Over 35 years later (has it really been that long?) and I'm still at it. My collection has now grown to include hundreds of Gongs, cymbals, bells, singing bowls, and pieces of resonant metal. Since 2002 I've worked under the name, **GONGTOPIA**, presenting concerts of original compositions & improvisations played mostly on metal instruments. I've also released some 14 albums of solo percussion music. Another aspect of my work is presenting *Gong Meditation Sessions* and *Sacred Sound Workshops*, using Gongs & Tibetan Singing Bowls. Pretty cool stuff!

I've shared my music with audiences around the country, including performances at Starwood Fest, Ingenuity Fest, The Milwaukee International Film Festival, and was twice invited to

present clinics at the **Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)**: *Explorations into Contemporary Gong Performance & Techniques* in 2005, and *The Healing Sound of Gongs & Singing Bowls* in 2012. I was also chosen as the featured performer at the dedication of **The Memphis Gong Chamber** in 2011.

My 2002 CD release, **Stars Show The Way**, was praised as "easily one of the best solo percussion records I've ever heard," by THE IMPROVISOR, while DRUM! magazine wrote, "Bettine has a unique vision that sets him apart from the hoards."

As a parallel career, I've also written about music and musicians for both magazines & books. From 1983-2008, I was a contributing writer for MODERN DRUMMER magazine, writing feature interviews, technical articles, and both product and music reviews. I've also written for AVANT, DownBeat, Rhythm, and many other music magazines. Among my books are: WHEN IN DOUBT, ROLL! (with Bill Bruford), PERCUSSION PROFILES (with Trevor Taylor), and THE THINKING DRUMMER series of instructional books. I also teach extensively, both privately, and in workshops & clinics around the country.



Ancient Sounds for Modern Times

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## Session Offerings

### GONG MEDITATION

This 90 minute session is all about sound, resonance, and its effects on the human body & energy systems. The Gong's vibrations can help balance and cleanse the energy in your body. They work at a cellular level, helping with stress, fatigue, depression, anger, and blocked energy. The vibrations can release blockages at the Chakras and other energy points, freeing past trauma and toxins. People are encouraged to bring a Yoga mat and/or blanket on which they can sit or lie, while allowing the therapeutic vibrations to wash over them.

A typical response from a participant is, *"I felt that experience processing through me for days....truly magic."* After a recent session, one person even said, *"I don't believe in this kind of stuff, but I came with a friend anyway. I was laying on the mat resisting, and when you hit the big Gong, I just opened up!"*

### SACRED SOUND WORKSHOP

This session is designed to introduce people to various Gongs, Singing Bowls, Bells, and other metal percussion. Participants are taught about various types of instruments (history & construction), different mallets & sticks, playing techniques, how to choose instruments, and how to use the instruments for personal meditation & sound therapy. My workshops are about the possibilities inherent in all of us, and finding a personal direction with the Gong/Bowl/Bell. If you open up to the Gong, it will reveal itself and its mysteries to you.



### COMBINED SESSIONS

A popular offering is a combined Sacred Sound Workshop, followed by a Gong Meditation Session. Each part is approximately 1 hour, with a short break in between. Participants are able to gain a deeper understanding of how the Gongs/Bowls/Bells work, and then experience it for themselves.

I am pleased to use & endorse:

Paiste cymbals/sounds/gongs  
Mike Balter Mallets  
Orpheus Percussion

Photos @ The Memphis Gong Chamber by Tim Shahady

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