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## TRANSFORMED BY SOUND

TONES THAT HEAL & REVEAL

- IN THE MOMENT WITH ALZHEIMER'S
- ANGELENO-TATAVIAM WALK FOR THE ANCESTORS
- YOGA TEACHER TO YOGA SCHOLAR

**+** FRANK GEHRY AND THE L.A. RIVER  
WHEN IT'S RIGHT TO SAY "I'M WRONG"  
THE TRANSCENDENT ORGASM



# Sound Is Powerful Medicine

Ancestral instruments  
& modern therapies  
that heal and reveal

By Diana Rico

**T**he master Andean *curandero de sonido* (sound healer) Tito La Rosa has meticulously laid out an altar with ancestral Peruvian instruments arranged in the four cardinal directions. As our guide into the use of these ancient healing tools, he has asked our group of 10



to sit in a circle around this “acoustic altar,” as he calls it. In my hands I’m carefully cradling a ceramic Peruvian whistling vessel—two conjoined bowls with slender necks like herons—which La Rosa has filled partway with water. I slowly tip the vessel toward my right, and the water pops and gurgles,





then emits a long whistling sound that penetrates right into my womb. “This is a sound that is very feminine, related to the uterus, to the origin,” he says. He instructs me to align my breathing with my pouring. I breathe and tip the vessel in synch, as if I were doing a yoga *asana*, and I can feel the waters in my own womb stirring, then something settling deep within my center. It feels like a kind of primal magic.

“The *vacija silbadora*, the whistling vessel, is not a musical instrument—it is a being,” says La Rosa. “We call these vessels ‘the Guardians of the Tradition.’ The intention is to open doors within.”

A descendent of Quechua Indians, trained so-

offer workshops, ceremonies and sound-healing concerts. In April I attended one called, *The Healing Power of the Ancestral Instruments of Peru*. For five hours we were immersed in the ancient Andean cosmovision, which teaches that the earth took form while the Creator sang, and that all beings are made of sound, rhythm and harmony. It was a potent, heart-opening experience that has continued to reverberate in my being.

Some 80 years ago, the medium Edgar Cayce predicted that sound would be the medicine of the future. But 2,000 years earlier, the indigenous peoples of the Andes were trilling condor-quill *antaras* (pan pipes), pouring water through *vacijas silbadoras*, rustling shakers made of dried leaves, and blowing bamboo flutes in order to balance body, mind and spirit. “Sound healing is the original medicine,” notes Teri Wilder, a San Diego-based certified sound healer who attended the workshop. “This is the medicine that came way before pills and machines.”

Western science backs up the idea that sound can heal. As UCLA nanotechnology pioneer James Gimzewski has shown, cells emit sound. Trauma, disease, toxic substances and other disturbances alter the healthy aural frequencies of cells; sound healing can bring these frequencies back into proper harmony. These days, skilled practitioners are using sound for everything from stress and pain relief to remedying sleep disorders and assisting the dying. Sound has been shown to be effective for pain control, increasing circulation, stimulating acupressure points, breaking up gall and kidney stones, entraining brainwaves and a host of other scientifically verifiable purposes, as well as for more esoteric therapies, such as balancing the chakras.

“The unique thing about sound healing in terms of it being sort of a medicine is [that] it has a blend of scientific and intuitive aspects,” says Christo Pellani, a longtime Los Angeles sound healer/musician who is trained in numerous healing modalities. With no existing documentation, we can guess that the ancient Andeans likely worked more on the intuitive end, much as La Rosa does today. “I drink from the tradition,” La Rosa explains, “but then I try to recreate things on the basis of what I feel.”



ciologist, musician, composer and recording artist, La Rosa—a tiny man of enormous humility and attentiveness—has spent more than 10 years recovering, preserving, studying and intuiting the ancestral music of his native Peru. He’s been invited to work with Stanford University archaeo-acoustics researchers at the pre-Inkan temple of Chavín de Huántar, was featured in the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, *Heart and Hands: Musical Instrument Makers of America*, and was honored in 2014 by the Peruvian Ministry of Culture as one of the artists who has done the most to disseminate Peruvian music globally. Every year he makes rounds through California, Oregon and New Mexico to



Photo: James Meillard





In the workshop—which La Rosa consistently refers to as *esta ceremonia* (this ceremony)—he takes us through nine “sound portals,” each associated with distinctive instruments and particular effects on the body and spirit. He opens the first sound portal by blowing mightily through a *pututo*, a conch shell, for a full two minutes without taking a breath, and it is as if an invisible energetic space is opening: “It is important that your first sound be a sound that invokes, that opens, that calls the sacred.”

And so he proceeds through the sound portals, teaching us to release, cleanse and purify negative energy with an *antara* fashioned from sacred condor and pelican quills and a *shakapa*, a shaker made of bound dried leaves. He takes us back to our family origins with “a very masculine flute, *la flauta de los abuelos* (the flute of the grandfathers) and a more feminine instrument, *la mama quena* (the mother of the flutes). And he opens *el munay*, which he describes as “the power of love,” with a double flute—one side masculine, one feminine; when the double flutes are played together, it sounds like the embodiment of

a beautiful relationship between two people. “It is called *la flauta del amor*, the flute of love,” he explains, as he has us lay down with our heads toward the altar so that our bodies radiate out like a starburst. “This moment that we have constructed is also the moment of *el perdon*, forgiveness. Anger and resentment are not good for love. If there is something you need to forgive, right now is the moment to do it, so love can flourish.” As he plays I feel my heart chakra heat up and stir, releasing anger I’m holding toward someone I trusted who transgressed my boundaries. Letting the double flute harmonies wash through me, I feel

my heart center soften into a feeling of safety. “Sound is invisible energy,” La Rosa says as he “seals” the work we have done by showing us how to play the *charango*, a small guitar-like Peruvian instrument whose enchanting music resembles a lute. “Your chakras receive the sound and they distribute it through your whole body. Sound can also be a seed that you can plant in your chest or in your bones. But above all,” he affirms, “sound is an expression of love.”

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## Sound Healers in the Greater L.A. Area

### Wayne Perry

[www.wayneperry.com](http://www.wayneperry.com)  
 Founder, Sound Therapy Center of Los Angeles. Vibrational medicine using toning, breath work, vocal harmonics and audio tapes.

### Carole Moskovitz

[www.singingfromtheheart.com](http://www.singingfromtheheart.com)  
 Ph.D. in Spiritual Science. Uses voice, toning, breath work, movement and inner listening for self-attunement and personal transformation.

### Christo Pellani

[www.soundformation.com](http://www.soundformation.com)  
 Certified TAMA-DO practitioner (tuning forks applied to Chinese acupuncture points); uses singing bowls, gongs, harmonium, drums, chakra alignment tubes and voice.

### Chris Rials-Seitz

[www.biotyping.com](http://www.biotyping.com)  
 President, Axis Evolving. Certified sound healer through Tom Kenyon. Offers one-on-one and community sessions.

