

# Serenity Through Sound at Reserve

By Pat Rogers

The setting seemed perfect for peace: a secluded stretch of lawn tucked among lush gardens and gigantic sculptures. The time was around eight o'clock on Saturday morning. The birds twittered a concert of tweets and chirps. Meditation teacher Jim Owen sat cross-legged on a sculptural wooden bench and talked about meditation and sound. The place was LongHouse Reserve in East Hampton.

What unfolded over the next 60 minutes was the first class in a series titled "Sound Meditation." For one hour every Saturday at 8 a.m. through September 1, Mr. Owen will lead workshops on the ways sound can preface silent meditation to deepen the experience. He believes that creating sound before meditating helps to quiet the mind and align vibrations with those found in the universe and the Divine—the ultimate energy.

"The purpose of using sound before meditation is to allow sound to align the vibrations of the human energy field," according to the workshop leader's description of the LongHouse series. "Sacred sounds assist the mind in turning inward and focusing on itself."

While the concept may sound esoteric, the practice and its effect on meditation are easy to understand and integrate. The entire series is designed to help the uninitiated gently wade into sound and meditation. For instance, the vast majority of workshop participants on Saturday had never meditated before, according to a show of hands. For those who have experience in meditating, the workshops can be easily assimilated into their existing practice, Mr. Owen said.

Each session begins with a short talk on the featured topic. Then the group disperses across the lawn to practice using sound with a bit more privacy. Mr. Owen gives individual guidance as needed. Participants reconvene to their seats, pillows or beach chairs to try the concept as a group.

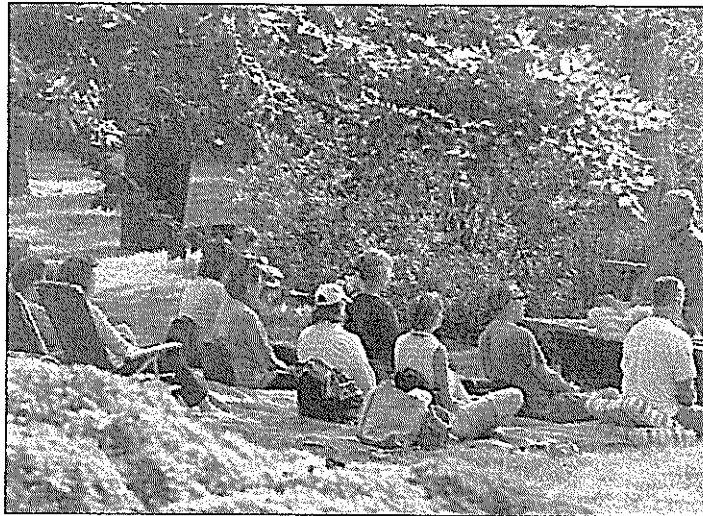
The one-hour session typically features two short meditations—approximately 10 minutes and 20 minutes in duration. Afterward, participants are encouraged to talk about what they experienced. The session concludes with questions answered, a description of the following week's session and encouragement to try meditating every day—even if only for five minutes.

"Meditation will teach you how to meditate," he said. "If you're not meditating every day, you're not really meditating."

The first session focused on "Developing Your Personal Aum." The next session, on June 9, will focus on "Mantras." Installments feature singing bowls, flower vibrations and using sound for healing. The series will also introduce a type of yoga and the way its interaction with sound can be integrated into a meditation practice. Traditions covered include Shakti, Shabda, Bhakti and Nada yoga.

Underlying the entire series is Mr. Owen's belief that sound is a tuning fork for the Divine, which can be felt only with the heart and not reasoned with the mind. He contends the Divine is energy and has a vibration, like all living things. When a meditator makes sound, the vibration joins other existing vibrations and will eventually resonate in the same rhythm.

"The Divine is a vibration, so whenever we meditate, we visit the Divine," he said in an interview after last Satur-



Jim Owen, far right, leads the first class in the "Sound Meditation" offered at the LongHouse Reserve in East Hampton.

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day's session. "The reason we do sound is to allow ourselves to entrain with the vibration of the Divine and open ourselves to the experience of Divine vibration." Mr. Owen went on to say that "entrain," in this context, means "when two different vibrations come into the same consciousness, they will come together."

Meditation is ultimately a tool for people to quiet the mind, turn themselves inward and experience the heart, he said.

"You cannot do the Divine with the mind," he said. "Trying to experience the Divine with the mind is like eating chicken stock with a fork. You keep getting a lot of fork and not a lot of chicken stock. The Divine needs to be experienced in the heart in order to be willing to surrender the ego."

The Sound Meditation series was designed to give people different tools to integrate sound into their meditation practice. People will derive something meaningful to take away, no matter what session they attend, Mr. Owen said. Since the series is designed to impart knowledge that builds upon prior sessions, people who attend the first two classes will likely have a fuller understanding, he suggested.

The series is based on some of the tenets of Nada yoga, an ancient Hindu tradition which is known as the "yoga of

sound." Nada yoga involves deep listening to the body's inner sounds and to vibrations found in the natural world. It is concerned with sounds that are audible and inaudible. This type of listening taps into increased consciousness and helps enhance a connection to the Divine, according to several websites.

"Nada yoga contains all the other three yogas," Mr. Owen said. "It's really what the series is based on."

Mr. Owen has been meditating daily for 14 years. About three years ago, he increased his daily practice from 20 minutes to one hour and has reaped benefits, he said. Mr. Owen has been leading the Sound Meditation series at LongHouse Reserve for around five years. In addition, he teaches meditation privately and runs workshops from his East Hampton home in the winter. By profession, he is a landscape designer. He is member of LongHouse Reserve's Garden Committee.

Sound Meditation is held every Saturday at 8 a.m. at LongHouse Reserve, 133 Hands Creek Road, East Hampton. Sessions are held outside near the Buckminster Fuller Fly's Eye Dome sculpture. In case of rain, class will be held inside. A \$15 contribution to LHR is suggested. A full line-up can be found at [www.longhouse.org](http://www.longhouse.org). Reservations can be made by calling 329-3569 or emailing [soundmeditation@longhouse.org](mailto:soundmeditation@longhouse.org).