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Ke Bo (left), music therapist at the Universiade Village's Music Therapy Center, shows how to use the rhythm of drumming to soothe the mind.

# Music to soothe the mind

THE THERAPY CENTER AT THE UNIVERSIADE VILLAGE WILL BE VERY WELCOME FOR ATHLETES

By SHI YINGYING  
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**SHENZHEN** — Sitting in a comfortable leather armchair and surrounded by delightful music, you are not in a first-class cabin, but the Universiade Village's Music Therapy Center.

"Music has its players and listeners, its professionals and amateurs, its teachers and students. Less-widely recognized are music therapists like us, who use rhythm, melody and song to help treat a number of conditions," said Ke Bo, the music therapist who runs the center.

Specially built for athletes before tight competition schedules, the Music Therapy Center is a feature that one couldn't find at previous Universiades. In four grand but carefully decorated rooms, a team of 13 trained music therapists will help the athletes lift their spirits and reduce pressure through either listening to or creating music during the 12 days of the games.

"There's a significant difference between simply listening to music and music therapy," said Ke, who is also a member of the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT), an international non-profit organization based in the United States.

People usually listen to music consciously no matter if they focus on the music itself or regard it as background. However, music's greater effect acts on

one's physical and mental states once he or she is clear-minded.

Ke said music was the most direct medium that could "talk" to the body and mind. "Participants reflect the diverse approaches of music therapy as it straddles the world of art and science," he said. "It's a bit like a light trance, which allows one to better approach his or her inner potential while hovering between consciousness and sub-consciousness."

There are two main types of music therapy at the center. Sometimes, Ke will listen to music with a patient and talk about the feelings or memories that it evokes. "That usually applies to those who can't sleep well because of nervousness before the big day," said Ke.

A special massage armchair-like device also helps record the athletes' physiology, such as heart rate, through a clip on the index finger hooked to a computer during a typical 20-minute music therapy session.

"You can ease the nerves after 10 minutes of listening to the music and a drop in the (stress) curve is expected," said Ke to a test subject, pointing to two small peaks after a downward slope. "You must have been thinking about things that made you upset during these time frames, did you?" he asked.

After getting a positive answer, Ke suggested a few solutions to deal with pressure. "Athletes are such a special and



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KE BO  
MUSIC THERAPIST

sensitive tribe that they sometimes overestimate past success or failure," he said. "The advantage usually goes to whoever has the better psychological endurance capacity."

The selection of music, according to Ke, is also a personal choice. "Unfortunately, music therapy didn't come to China until 2000, that explains why most of the available music (for thera-

py) was classic western music," said Ke. "However, I do believe our Chinese folk music has the same effect."

Some of the most common "music prescriptions" include Beethoven's *Symphony No 6*, Brahms *Symphony No 2* and Debussy's *Noctures*. But Ke said he spent lots of time on combining traditional folk music into the sessions.

"I usually start with the question of, 'Do you prefer western music or Chinese?' followed by offering the client a few options for meditation such as in a forest, by the sea or up on a mountain," said Ke.

Another form of therapy, which is more fun for team players, is designed for group clients with a dozen of *djembes*, the skin-covered African drum meant to be played with bare hands, circling the biggest classroom.

Clients who are too shy to come alone or those who prefer to work within a team are encouraged to play an instrument or two along with the therapist. "We've prepared western instruments such as guitars and oriental instruments like the *cucurbit* flute (a pipe-like instrument unique to the ethnic groups in China's Yunnan province)," said Ke.

"It doesn't matter if you are a professional (musician) or not — I am personally not (a skilled musician). The group music therapy works as long as everybody participates to break nervous tension during the interaction," he said.