



Editorial

Cultural Stories in Music Therapy

Giorgos Tsisiris

According to the *World Culture Report* of UNESCO (2000), cultures are not fixed, bounded and crystallized containers. Instead they are “transboundary creations, exchanged through the world [...]. We must now regard culture as a process rather than as a finished product” (UNESCO 2000: 15, as cited in Thomson 2005: 11). A similar view is adopted by Stige (2002) in his seminal book *Culture-Centered Music Therapy*. Stige writes that culture is not a fixed entity. In contrast, he thinks of culture as something flexible, as “continuously developing ways of life and practices of meaning-making, ranging from the individual to the regional to the global level of social organization” (Stige 2002: 1). From this perspective, the constant flow of culture, as an embodied everyday experience, is made up by the subtleties and complexities of individual and collective life histories. The article and interviews included in this issue of *Approaches*, illustrate these various levels of ‘cultural stories’, as well as their mutual interaction.

In the article *Music Therapy and Culture: An Essential Relationship?* Daisy Morris explores the role of culture in music therapy practice. Taking Aigen’s (2001) premises on music, culture and therapy as a starting point, Morris discusses how our therapeutic awareness and receptiveness as music therapists interrelates with our cultural awareness. She explores how music therapy work can be affected by both the therapist’s and the client’s cultural backgrounds and histories, as well as the wider cultural framework within which therapy takes place.

The interview section of *Approaches*, which is inaugurated in this issue, starts with an interview of Pauline Etkin who reflects on the development of policies and practices in music therapy. Etkin, whom I had the honour to interview, draws on her rich personal experience in Nordoff Robbins, London. She interweaves creatively historical facts with politico-economic aspects, while she brings in

the foreground personal stories which often stay ‘behind the scenes’. Etkin reflects on aspects of the music therapy development in the UK, as well as Nordoff Robbins’ role in this development, while she discusses their potential relevance to the development of music therapy profession in other countries, such as Greece, where music therapy is in its initial stage.

The next interview is with Diane Austin who was interviewed by Evangelia Papanikolaou. This interview explores the use and significance of voice in music therapy, and more particularly the pioneering voice-based model of psychotherapy that has been developed by Austin: Vocal Psychotherapy. This exploration reflects on Austin’s (2008) recent book *The Theory and Practice of Vocal Psychotherapy: Songs of the Self* by drawing on her own personal life history, but also from her extensive clinical experience as a vocal psychotherapist.

This issue of *Approaches* concludes with two new sections: i) New Publications in Greece, and ii) Upcoming Events. Both sections are dedicated to the fields of music therapy and special music education, while they draw from the international community with an emphasis on Greece. These sections aim to provide useful information and raise the readership’s awareness of relevant news and developments. This raise of awareness is linked directly with *Approaches*’ vision (Tsisiris 2009) for advancement of scientific dialogue, for fertile connection of practice, theory and research, as well as for reliable public update through the free dissemination of its articles and resources.

Approaches, like many other online peer-reviewed journals (e.g. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, see Stige 2009), follows the wider international movement of Open Access publishing. This open access to scholarly journals is vital to research progress and public advancement (COPE 2010), especially during the recent economic downturn that both Greece and other European, but

not only, countries face. This downturn has already brought consequent challenges on healthcare and educational services, as well as on the funding resources for research and publishing. *Approaches* hopes to support effectively the work of practitioners and researchers in the fields of music therapy and special music education by promoting a culture where *evidence*-based practice is balanced with *practice*-based evidence.

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