



Editorial

In Times of Crisis: Music, Love and Human Life

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During the preparation of this issue of *Approaches*, major social, political and economic shifts have taken place not only in Greece, but also in other countries across the world, often with adverse consequences on people's everyday living.

In times of crisis, such as the present one, the question 'what is the potential role of music in human life?' becomes crucial. What can music offer to promote not only personal wellbeing, but also social renewal and transformation? What can music practitioners (such as music therapists, music teachers, and other professionals within the field of music and health) offer to the local communities within which they live and work? In times when existing social structures are deconstructed, when political and economic systems fail, when people's hope, faith and social bonds are weakened, what can music practitioners actually bring?

As I seek answers to the questions above, two words come to mind: *music* and *love*. Some examples of attributing practical meaning and applying these words in life can be found in the work of visionary individuals, such as Boxill, Geuter and Robbins.

"*Music therapy is love in action*": these are the words of Edith Boxill (1916-2005), who founded the *Music Therapists for Peace*¹ (MTP) network in the 1980's and dedicated her work to peace-building internationally. According to her, music therapists have invaluable resources which can benefit people's lives beyond the limits of the 'treatment room' (Vaillancourt 2011). Boxill believed that music therapists' resources and skills can bring "*love in action*" within the global community, and I suppose she did not refer to love in the romantic sense of the word. Boxill's perspective appears to resonate with Herbert

Geuter's² view who considered love as a particular quality of *perception* (Turry 2001). This quality of perception is characterised by one's will to understand another's needs and potential.

Commenting on love and its role in the relationship between music therapist and client, Clive Robbins (1927-2011) had stated the following:

"I think one's [a therapist's] own attitude of love for a client is tremendously important. That is not a romantic or sentimental love. It is selfless or unconditional love: *I want you to be happier. I know you. I've become attached to you. I want to serve you, so that your life can become richer and more complete. I want to serve you that you can push aside the things that are destroying your later life and your relationships. I want you to teach me more about what it is like to be you...*" (Robbins 2009).

The power of love and music's role in expressing and communicating this power was a recurrent theme in Robbins' presentations. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that after his death he is remembered as "an example of love in action" (Turry 2012). The work of Robbins, Boxill and other visionary people, functions as a source of inspiration, especially in times when the power of love is often replaced by the 'love' for power.

With these thoughts in mind, and in a time of crisis, I warmly welcome you to this new journal issue. Here you will find a range of material including four articles, five book reviews and a conference report as well as a series of supplementary material: abstracts from a pre-conference seminar of ISME (2012), translated abstracts of articles, and a list of new international publications and upcoming events.

¹ For further information, see Boxill (1997) and the following website: www.musictherapistsforpeace.org

² Herbert Geuter was Paul Nordoff's and Clive Robbins' mentor (see Simpson 2009).

Each of the four articles in this issue draws from diverse professional and cultural fields of music practices, focusing on different aspects of these practices. Tina Warnock writes about the use of non-verbal voice in music therapy. Drawing from her work with a young girl with severe learning disabilities and autism, Warnock reflects on how voicework can enable people to build connections within themselves, with others and with their environment – an essential process for one’s growth and wellbeing in life.

Moving from an individual music therapy setting in the UK (Warnock) to an educational group setting in Germany, Irmgard Merkt’s article presents her work with the inclusive choir *Voices* which is part of the project *Dortmunder Modell: Musik* at the Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences at TU Dortmund University. In this context, the author presents the choir’s philosophy and ethos as well as its implications on the development of cultural participation models that promote the social inclusion of people with and without disabilities.

Merkt’s article has an implicit element of social activism, something that becomes more evident in Hannah Linklater’s and Lewis Forbes’ article where two cross-cultural community music projects between children in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Scotland are described. Linklater’s and Forbes’ work shows the power of music to serve as a catalyst for communal change and development of social bonds between inter-ethnic groups of people. Music’s potential for community growth, integration and mutual acceptance resonates with Boxill’s and Robbins’ vision as outlined above.

Vision and practice however, need to be combined with critical thinking, evaluation and systematic evidence gathering for one’s work. Martin Lawes’ article focuses on this combination as an essential element, both for responding to the contemporary demands for evidence-based practices and for securing funding for the continuation and development of services. In particular, Lawes introduces an adaptation of the AQR (Assessment of the Quality of Relationship) instrument which is specifically designed for music therapy and autism (Schumacher & Calvet 2007). The author shows how the use of this instrument within the education sector can contribute to the development of therapeutic plans, as well as to termly and annual reports.

The articles (as well as the other material) included in this issue reflect not only the wealth of music practices (from music therapy, to special/inclusive music education and community music), but also the wealth of the resources that music practitioners can bring to the societies within which they live and work. So let's not overlook the

possibilities that music and we – as musical beings and music practitioners – can bring, especially in times of crisis.

Perhaps, *through* and *within* music, we can bring and share a different quality of perception. Perhaps we can bring ‘*love in action*’ to a world where the will to power appears to prevail. Perhaps we can learn from each other how it is to be in another’s position and find alternative ways of co-living in the world. Perhaps we can improvise. Together. Now.

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