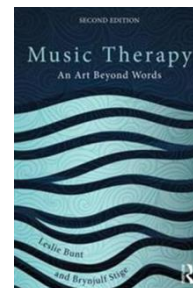


## Book review

# Music Therapy: An Art Beyond Words (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (Leslie Bunt & Brynjulf Stige)

Reviewed by Stine Lindahl Jacobsen



Title: Music Therapy: An Art Beyond Words (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) | Authors: Leslie Bunt & Brynjulf Stige | Year: 2014 | Publisher: Routledge | Pages: 255 | ISBN: 978-0415450690

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This second edition of Leslie Bunt's book from 1994 is a well-guided journey through historical, clinical, theoretical and research-based perspectives of music therapy bringing us to the present day by both Leslie Bunt and Brynjulf Stige. New areas of clinical practice across the lifespan are described and these are combined with inspirational dialogues concerning the profession and discipline of music therapy. The authors are clear on changes and additions made in the second edition including more descriptions of music as a resource and music as part of community with deep respect for individual cultures, nations and beliefs. No particular theoretical stance or clinical approach is favoured and an admirable aim of uniting music therapists despite cultural, clinical or theoretical differences is evident throughout the text. The book consists of an introduction followed by nine chapters in which the first three chapters form the basis of understanding music therapy history, music therapy approaches or models, and the core elements of music. The next four chapters focus on music therapy practices and give illustrative case examples supplemented with both theoretical and research perspectives; their relevance to the

examples has the effect of making music therapy come alive. The final two chapters discuss dilemmas and challenges which face music therapy as a profession and as a discipline; this is followed by an image-evoking epilogue described via a dialogue between the two authors.

Introducing the book, the authors connect readers with the everyday experience of music to explain what music therapy is all about. This includes a wish to further develop an ecological focus in presenting music therapy and a discussion on views pertaining to health and illness. The mix (or hybrid) between British and Norwegian perspectives and cultures seems appropriate in seeking to create a depth of analysis and an overview which favours no one singular stance.

Chapter 1 tells the story of music therapy as both a health profession and a music profession, looking at how different societies have integrated what music therapy has to offer. Depending on different needs in societies throughout history, different approaches and definitions have evolved as the process of registration and recognition is unique for each nation. Different areas and activities are briefly described and the focus of

looking across the lifespan in the subsequent chapters is introduced. Complex questions are asked which make good arguments for the purpose and aim of the book.

Chapter 2 opens with two clinical case examples which are presented and reflected upon from different theoretical perspectives. These include medical, behavioural, psychodynamic, humanistic, transpersonal and culture-centered perspectives (of which the latter two may permeate the former four). A presentation of thoughts concerning community, feminist, resource-oriented and music-centered stances affords readers a broad overview of music therapy. Theories are presented to support clinical examples illustrating how different perspectives might interconnect. This helps to portray how some stances may be more flexible than others. When looking at the benefits of music therapy, the needs of clients and the type of information that can be obtained, the authors might have included reflection upon the growing field of music therapy assessment and microanalysis since 1994. These aspects, however, are addressed later in chapter 7 when looking more generally upon music therapy as a profession.

In chapter 3 the core elements of music and how these elements affect us as humans are presented. Once again different musical/psychological perspectives and research studies are included thereby giving a thorough insight into how music works and how it is used in music therapy practice. For the outsider this is a good introduction while for music therapists it revisits the core concepts of our field by looking upon them through more or less familiar lenses.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter to consider music therapy with different age groups. Child health is the initial focus and it quickly becomes clear that this chapter has been thoroughly revised to bring it up-to-date with contemporary theories of Stern and Trevarthen (see Malloch & Trevarthen 2009; Stern 2000, 2010). This is supplemented with significant work from music therapy clinicians and researchers from the last twenty years. Affect attunement, communicative musicality and work with families are elaborated upon and nicely linked with illustrative case examples.

Music therapy and adolescent health in chapter 5 begins with a thorough understanding of young people and adolescents, bringing forth new perspectives such as children's rights, stigma and the problematic use of music. The highlighting of differences between a resource-oriented approach and assessment of pathology seems to slightly favour a more group and community-oriented approach. However, the authors still point to the

fact that contexts and needs differ; this is illustrated through clinical case examples and qualitative and quantitative research studies which advocate how music is a powerful resource for young people.

Chapter 6 starts by describing how each client's relationship with music is different. The clinical examples in this chapter include adults with learning disabilities, mental health issues, neurological injuries, cancer and palliative care. The case examples illustrate different models and techniques such as analytical and resource-oriented approaches, active and receptive techniques, and activities in music therapy. The existential curative factors of group work suggest there has been a change in clinical music therapy practice from an individual focus to a more community and group-oriented focus. The presentation of research is more detailed in this chapter with different kinds of research being discussed while the subject of research hierarchy is considered in chapter 9.

In chapter 7 music therapy with elderly people completes the circle of looking across the lifespan. Refreshingly, the chapter starts with looking at how older adults use music to enhance wellbeing and sustain a meaningful life, keeping isolation and loneliness at bay. Music is described as a health resource and is not only intended for older adults who may be physically frail. Cognitive-behavioural, humanistic and psychodynamic approaches are discussed when considering people with dementia. This is achieved by mixing, narratively, theoretical reflections with clinical case examples; thereby cleverly and smoothly linking the case examples together. The challenges of musical preferences and connecting with people with dementia become crystal clear to the reader and Stige's own experience within this field seems quite evident.

Chapter 8 aims somewhat ambitiously to discuss music therapy as a profession. Music therapy strives to ensure and foster health and to meet its purpose in society. Yet this happens in many different ways and places, and with a range of medical and contextual aims. An example of a day in the life of a music therapist is used to illustrate the many different roles we have and our level of expertise in being flexible. The authors talk of three axes: the what, how and where of the music therapy profession, offering a simple model to explain their point. Interdisciplinary collaboration is described by pointing out how music therapy can supplement and enlarge fields of physiotherapy, education, music and health; yet how music therapy also offers something unique.

In the final chapter the authors consider music therapy as a discipline and are not afraid to include

the tensions and struggles we might experience when art and science can pull us in different directions. The dilemma of describing nonverbal experiences with numbers and language is portrayed, and opposites such as striving for objective or subjective knowledge are discussed – again without favouring any one stance. The authors thoroughly prove their point that a discipline is not only a body of knowledge but also a culture. Bunt and Stige urge music therapists to embrace tensions and contradictions using different perspectives and approaches as ways to understand, instead of ways to argue. The aim here is to allow multiple perspectives and multiple truths to co-exist in a hybrid cultural mix. The epilogue of the book is a wonderful image of two knowledgeable men sitting and discussing in front of a warm fire, making recipes of future nourishing salads for the music therapy culture and community.

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