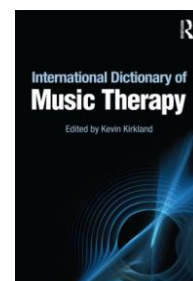




## Book review

# The International Dictionary of Music Therapy (Kevin Kirkland, Ed.)

Reviewed by Helen Short



Title: The International Dictionary of Music Therapy | Editor: Kevin Kirkland | Publication year: 2013 | Publisher: Routledge Publishers | Pages: 186 | ISBN: 978-0415809412

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Upon discovering the *International Dictionary of Music Therapy* I was intrigued as to what exactly the publication would comprise of and had questions about the purpose and content of a dictionary dedicated solely to our profession. This is the first music therapy dictionary, with Kirkland taking his inspiration from Routledge's *Dictionary of Art Therapy* (Wood 2011) and outlining his intention to publish a work that serves to connect music therapists across continental lines and establish more of a global common music therapy language (Kirkland 2011). Having made links, collaborated and shared ideas with colleagues practising internationally this made sense to me.

The array of contributors is certainly interesting. Kirkland makes clear in the preface the intention he had of creating a rich source of culturally diverse contributors from other countries, contexts and "far-away places" (p. xxvii). Canadian in origin, he assembled entries from 89 authors based in Australia, France, Latvia, Russia and Scotland, to name a few. What is also made clear is Kirkland's stance respecting the knowledge of both the expert

and the novice, with entries from some of the most experienced and internationally renowned researchers and clinicians: Jos de Backer, Felicity Baker, Barbara Wheeler, sitting alongside those from students in the field such as Melissa Telford, a trainee in her fourth year of study of the Bachelor of Music Therapy degree. This allows the presentation of views of the most trusted voices in our profession alongside new and upcoming practitioners shaping our ever-developing field.

Although the majority are music therapists, there are a handful of contributors specialising in other fields including music education, musicology, medicine and psychology, and the material covered is broad. Kirkland describes his audience as "music therapists, theorists, educators, researchers and students" and states the focus of the material is upon "terms, models, founders and methods that can typically be applied to a range of client needs" (pp. xxvii-xxviii). This covers many areas including research, clinical practice, philosophy, sociology, science and the technical aspects of music. I was interested to read entries on the brain stem

(Stephen Glascoe and Liz Coombes, p. 16) and brainwave states (Lee Bartel, p. 17), areas I have not yet needed to consider in my clinical work, and it was useful to refresh my knowledge on the intricacies of modulation (Peter Martens and Kevin Kirkland, pp. 76-77). Of those more specific to the profession, entries defining familiar facets of music therapy or terms we might encounter or apply on a daily basis, such as Jin Hyun Kim's contribution on 'empathy' (p. 41) or Laurel Young's entry defining 'music psychotherapy' (p. 82) are juxtaposed with entries that may be more foreign to the reader such as Cecilia Jourt Pineau's entry on the 'U-Base music therapy method' (p. 135) or Kevin Kirkland's entry on the 'creation axis' (p. 30). There is also some documentation of the history of the profession via biographical entries on a selection of those pivotal to its development, such as: Juliette Alvin (Kevin Kirkland, pp. 7-8), Leslie Bunt (Kevin Kirkland, pp. 18-19) and Clive Robbins (Jennifer Lin, p. 115).

Within the music therapy-specific material the diversity and flexibility of the profession is well-represented. The way in which music therapy has adopted and utilised concepts from other professions and areas is illustrated within this book; Varvara Pasiali's entry on constructivism, a philosophical concept (p. 28), is one example of this. Again, in his writing of the publication, Kirkland describes discovering terms that he considered "unique" (p. xxvii) within a culture and there is a lovely sense of embracing the novel, emerging and unknown embodied in this publication. I was very pleased to encounter Susan Hadley's definitions of hip hop (pp. 58-59) and rap as therapy (p. 109), especially since apart from her publication in 2011, there is still a relative paucity of literature in this area. I was fascinated to read about the model of gay affirmative therapy (GAT) (Bill Ahessy, p. 51) and Gabriel Fedrico's entry on focal music therapy in obstetrics (p. 48) took me by surprise. I was led to wonder at times, however, if this was at the expense of including more widely used terms applicable to more widespread frontline clinical work. There are no entries on dementia, psychosis, adult mental health or the term forensic for example, which seemed peculiar since one would expect such definitions to be relevant globally and therefore be addressed, especially given that the publication is also directed towards students.

There are many ways in which this book can be useful beyond providing a definition. The broad selection of material provides a picture of the

diversity of music therapy culture and practice globally, something which I felt was lacking from the academic and discourse within my own training in the UK. Many music therapists, regardless of nationality or context, will find themselves looking to expand their practice or, at the very least, refresh their knowledge and this book is a great starting point for doing so. Reading up on core clinical terms fundamental to therapy work could provide a helpful reminder of what it is that's so valuable about our profession and other entries could prove beneficial in stimulating reflection, or expanding thinking about clinical work. As I practise as a predominantly psychodynamic music therapist, Hadley's entry on feminist music therapy (p. 47) helped me to reframe and reconsider my work with one client and Kirkland's definition of 'acoustic ecology' (p. 1) provided some insight into the impact of the external environment upon my work in one institution. Definitions relevant to neurological music therapy caught my attention as although this was touched upon during my training, this is a field I know little about, and herein lies the value of this book. I imagine for many practitioners it would be useful to be able to access a wealth of concise yet comprehensive accounts as we never know when we may be required to present it in regard to a certain client, to a certain professional or within a certain institution. The book also offers some practical assistance via entries such as 'documentation' (Kevin Kirkland, pp. 36-37). One of the many beautiful things about our profession is that we are able to use music and our clinical skills to provide a flexible approach to meet the diverse needs of our client group(s) and Kirkland's publication is a great resource for stimulating ideas for interventions, musical structures and therapeutic approaches.

Notwithstanding its many merits, there are certain characteristics of the publication that I took issue with. Despite its broad selection of international contributors and Kirkland's goal of moving "beyond a solely North American lens of music therapy" (p. xxvii), from my perspective I would say the book retains a predominantly North American feel. This is perhaps inevitable given that of the 89 entries, 48 are written by contributors Canadian or North American in origin or who are practising in these areas. Consider Kirkland's entry "charting" for example, "the process of documenting client care in a medical record" (p. 22) which one might perceive as distinctly American. Is this term accurate for readers beyond North America? Naomi

Bell's entry of "circle reflections" (p. 23) in my opinion, could provide another example of this.

As a result of the diversity of contributors, there are obvious, inevitable differences in writing style and naturally, certain entries have a complex, technical feel whilst others feel more relaxed or generally descriptive. This means the reader is met with an uneven tone when reading the book from cover to cover although this is not such a significant problem given it is likely that the reader will consider entries in isolation.

Of the entries defining techniques, models and approaches, the benefits of an approach or intervention are often encapsulated. One prediction is that the music therapy reader would appreciate some entries taking a more critical stance. Consider Shushadarzhan's account of music acupuncture therapy (MAT), for example, which describes the intervention as a substitute for "traditional acupuncture" (p. 80). While this may be the case there is a lack of scientific evidence about the benefits of traditional acupuncture in the majority of conditions it is used for, therefore, one might assume MAT bears the same status. Although Kirkland admits encountering a vast number of terms, and that he found maintaining brevity a challenge, I would have also found it useful to have been pointed towards the limitations of an approach, where appropriate.

Kirkland also acknowledges that in collating entries from around the world, he began to realise that "some music therapy terms have a relatively [...] consistent usage" whilst others have "very diverse [...] even contradictory understandings" (p. xxvii), which may account for my disagreement with the definitions of some terms. I consider my approach psychodynamically-informed but flexible, and my reading of this book was through an open lens. I was disappointed, however, to read that Kirkland's entry on 'containment' (p. 29), although referencing Bion, neglected to include his original definition as well as the entry on 'splitting' (pp. 125-126). Furthermore, Kirkland, failed to acknowledge the work of Melanie Klein at all. I was also led to question whether further editing may have been required before the book went to print. I noticed within Kirkland's entry on Juliette Alvin he references the British Society for Music Therapy, which many British readers will know merged with the Association of Professional Music Therapists to become the British Association for Music Therapy over four years ago (BAMT 2015).

Despite my criticisms above, overall I would

consider this a welcome addition to music therapy literature. It is hard to deny the usefulness of this publication and the proof of the pudding is certainly in the eating. During the process of reviewing this book I consulted it several times; once to assist a colleague trained in a community therapy approach by pointing her towards definitions of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapy; to educate myself in alternative theoretical models and search for inspiration for my own academic writing and to assist my music therapy trainee with her course work. I would say that this publication will continue to function as my first point of reference for future research, clinical and academic work and could serve the same purpose for others. As an 'international' publication, the book should be available to a wide and diverse population and as a reader, taking into account my own responses to the material, I imagine this could also serve to stimulate some interesting interdisciplinary discussion. I take my hat off to Kirkland for providing us with a rich, culturally diverse resource which in his own words provides a glimpse into the "expansive and expressive world of music therapy" (p. xxix).

## REFERENCES

BAMT (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.bamt.org/>

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### Suggested citation:

Short, H. (2015). Book review: "International Dictionary of Music Therapy" (Kevin Kirkland, Ed.). *Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy, First View* (Advance online publication), 1-3.