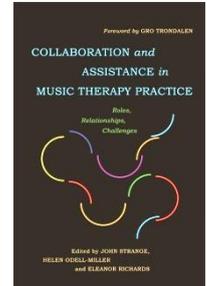


BOOK REVIEW

Collaboration and assistance in music therapy practice: Roles, relationships, challenges (Strange, Odell-Miller & Richards, Eds.)



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Title: Collaboration and assistance in music therapy practice: Roles, relationships, challenges **Editors:** John Strange, Helen Odell-Miller & Eleanor Richards **Publication year:** 2017 **Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers **Pages:** 200 **ISBN:** 978-1-84905-702-8

REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Broad, BA, MSc, works with Barchester Healthcare and also as a freelance music therapist offering music therapy to support frail older people with physical disabilities and dementia. She previously worked for seven years with Nordoff Robbins Scotland with children and adults with a range of learning difficulties, communication disorders, emotional behavioural difficulties, mental health problems, and in end of life care. She has also facilitated placements for students on the MSc Music Therapy programme at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. [mvbroad@talktalk.net]

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The presence of significant others in music therapy sessions has proven to be an ongoing topic for discussion during supervision of my own clinical practice. In examining the complexities of working alongside others, recurring and sometimes unanswered questions have arisen. In which circumstances is it helpful to have additional assistance? Do extra hands become a hindrance rather than an aid to therapeutic practice? How do we as therapists adapt our practice to meet the challenges of working collaboratively in diverse situations? Discussion with colleagues showed that I was not alone in wrestling with such thoughts. On opening this book, I experienced an immediate resonance on reading “A well trodden territory in need of a map” (p. 13), an apt title for the introductory chapter of this latest addition to the literature.

Edited by three very experienced therapists and researchers, John Strange, Helen Odell-Miller and Eleanor Richards, this book explores the role of carers, staff, assistants, students, volunteers and family members as skill sharers in music therapy sessions, and demonstrates the benefits of collaborative, integrated cross-disciplinary work in a variety of settings. Containing eighteen chapters, it is written by international authors from a clinical, narrative and/or research perspective and is intended to help practitioners and trainees in their practice.

In the Introduction, which provides a succinct summary of each chapter, Strange suggests this book should be regarded more as a “reader” than a handbook (p. 15) as it does not offer a one-size-fits-all model. It seeks to address a gap in the literature in focusing on the importance of attendees in

facilitating the developing relationship with clients and in enabling clients to gain as much as possible from their music therapy sessions. As Strange points out, there can be no “fly on the wall” as everyone present in the room will impact on the music therapy session whether as an active participant or observer (p. 14).

He then goes on in the next chapter to discuss his work with teenagers with Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and the teenagers’ Support for Learning Assistants (SLA), implementing an approach described as a Triadic Support of Interaction by Improvisation (TSII), which supports the client-assistant relationship through improvised music. SLAs were shown video footage of sessions in which they themselves had participated. Findings from semi-structured interviews of their responses to the video clips are discussed in relation to attachment theory. Strange identifies the need for further study and leads the reader to chapter 13 in which he explores this topic in greater detail and outlines the challenges of researching the outcomes of improvisational music therapy. From the reader’s perspective, it may have been helpful in leading to a clearer understanding had these chapters been linked consecutively within the book.

Attachment theory permeates the writing of several authors in this volume. Anthi Agrotou presents her analysis of a single case study of a pioneering psychodynamic group music therapy project in Cyprus (chapter 8). Young adults with profound learning disabilities had grown up from early childhood in an isolated state institution, looked after by mainly untrained staff who had little expectation of the patients’ functional and emotional abilities, and with little stimulation or emotional contact between them. This chapter traces the development of the growth of attachment bonds between carers and patients facilitated by group therapy acting as a secure base and by the therapist modelling ways of being which enabled carers to respond intuitively towards patients. Carers became primary attachment figures, rather than ‘escorts’, and were able to facilitate the patients’ evolving ability for self-expression, creativity and intimacy as “buried skills saw the light of day” (p. 165). Agrotou describes this as an “apprenticeship model” (p. 166) with carers developing into effective responsive auxiliary therapists. For me this is a very powerful and moving chapter, clearly written with musical examples highlighting the journey of the therapeutic process. I was left with an overwhelming desire to see video footage of this work, a feeling which was indeed reinforced in the subsequent chapter when Tessa Watson (p. 181) refers to Agrotou’s (1999) moving video.

Watson describes an approach developed over many years working with people with PMLD using a music therapy and sensory interaction group involving pre-composed and improvised music, physiotherapy exercises, intensive interaction and Soundbeam technology. In this chapter she specifically works with carers to develop their own working practice. Sessions are led by two therapists who model facilitative relating and provide an environment where emotions may be contained, offering a creative space for care staff to observe and reflect about clients in new ways. She places particular emphasis on the importance of waiting and silence to facilitate client processing and response. Watson highlights a gap in the literature of the importance of touch when working with people with profound multiple learning difficulties. Touch is present in all early attachment relationships yet some places of work have ‘no touch’ policies. She discusses the parallel process for therapists and staff in dealing with their own feelings surrounding the sometimes painful realities of their work and poses the question of how work and feelings interact with policy and strategic thinking in the current healthcare climate.

During her MSc studies at Queen Margaret University, Hannah Munro investigated the experience of five music therapists from different training backgrounds with diverse clinical experience who had worked with staff in sessions (chapter 2). She identifies benefits and challenges of team working and concludes that successful collaborative working is most likely to be achieved when staff understand that music therapy is client-led and when they themselves feel valued and have an understanding of their role. Munro provides guidelines for good practice covering the management of the therapist-assistant relationship including what is expected of both therapist and assistant. These guidelines may be of particular interest for trainee therapists.

The experiences of trainees working on placement with assistants is investigated in the next chapter by Catherine Warner, clinical supervisor and music therapy educator. She presents retrospective accounts from three practising music therapists which form part of a larger ongoing narrative inquiry research study. Warner highlights the variety of placement models and approaches offered on different music therapy training programmes in the UK. She considers how the presence and intervention of others may affect trainees' work and the development of their identity as a therapist. The insights in this chapter may be of particular interest for supervisors and educators as well as trainee therapists.

Helen Odell-Miller describes the role of co-therapists and assistants who are non-music therapists in adult mental health and dementia groups (chapter 5) and considers the dynamics arising from their inclusion. She highlights a gap in the literature with regard to assistants acting as a dynamic force to enable the development of trust and interaction in music therapy which might not otherwise be possible.

Jorg Fachner discusses in chapter 10 the traditional role of co-therapist in the sense of the Nordoff and Robbins partnership. He notes this chapter differs from the rest of the book in that a Nordoff Robbins co-therapist is likely to be a trained music therapist who only meets the client in the context of music therapy. Although this chapter is written from the therapist's point of view, he also identifies a gap in the literature regarding the perspective from the co-therapy angle and examines the scope of the co-therapy role and the relational quality of therapy. He says the intuitive relationship which evolves between therapist and co-therapist can enable the co-therapist to become the therapist's "third arm" and the "catalyst" of art between therapist and client (p. 198). He notes cultural differences in approach in leading and following within the therapeutic process, evident amongst Nordoff Robbins therapists in the USA and Germany.

Music therapist Ruth Melhuish describes a qualitative study undertaken jointly with dance movement therapist Catherine Beuzebec in a nursing home in London for residents with moderate to advanced dementia (chapter 6). The study was initiated in response to an arts therapies service review identifying a need to develop and evaluate ongoing service provision at the home. The intention of the authors was not to compare and contrast their respective art forms but to focus on common aims of facilitating emotional expression and developing relationships with others. Music therapy and dance movement therapy sessions were conducted separately and supported by care staff. Findings from staff interviews identify the impact of this experience on staff attitudes and approaches to their own practice. Melhuish highlights many issues relevant to contemporary approaches in dementia care. Insights into the therapists' own perspectives of working in this collaborative venture were not addressed in this chapter but would have been of interest.

Ming Hung Su, head music therapist with the charity Methodist Homes Association continues the theme (chapter 7) of supporting residents and caregivers involved in the field of dementia care. He suggests that by equipping caregivers with additional skills and knowledge they can play a significant role in prolonging the effects of music therapy beyond the session on a day-to-day and moment-by-moment basis. Using the qualitative results from caregiver interviews, he examines how music therapy might be embedded in daily care and highlights the global challenge and major therapeutic target of managing neuropsychiatric symptoms in dementia care.

In chapter 11 Strange, Fearn and O'Connor describe an approach named 'Music and Attuned Movement Therapy' developed while working with children with profound neurological damage in partnership with other professionals or family members who take the role of 'movement facilitator' in offering multi-modal communication. Clear musical transcriptions illumine the interaction between musical input and the physical responses of the child. Mutual respect and a shared agenda developed between therapists and nursery nurses with post-session debriefing forms a crucial part of the therapy. A very welcome inclusion by the authors is the perspectives of the health professionals supporting this intervention. The physiotherapist describes the therapist's music as attuning by following rather than leading which strengthened her own focus on the child. From the occupational therapist's perspective, musical structure contributed to the child's active engagement. Parents were also supported to carry therapeutic strategies into the home environment.

The theme of collaborative working continues in the subsequent chapter, co-authored by Strange and Lyn Weekes who was head physiotherapist at a large UK NHS hospital for people with learning disabilities in the 1970s. Weekes worked collaboratively with the late Tony Wigram in developing an approach called 'Music and Movement', a hybrid intervention between physiotherapy and music therapy with a key role for hands-on assistants whose sensitive use of touch to facilitate movement lies at the core of this model. Lyn and Tony worked mainly with groups of adult clients at risk of developing fixed deformities. The aims of this approach were ultimately those of physiotherapy to maintain and extend flexibility and range of movement. The means, however, were modifications of physio- and music-therapeutic strategies.

Sarah Hadley of Oxleas Music Therapy Service outlines the nature and origins of 'Interactive Music Making' in a children's community music service. Interactive Music Makers are trained to offer a developmentally-based service to children with less complex difficulties than those offered traditional music therapy. She discusses the collaborative roles of transient practitioners (music therapists) and constant practitioners (parents, teachers and others with whom the child has ongoing contact). Hadley developed a Music Therapy Home Programme by skill sharing with parents to foster secure attachment bonds between parent and child facilitated through music making.

Pornpan Kaenampornpan also offers guidance (chapter 4) on the involvement of parents and family members in music therapy sessions as well as in the home environment. Her doctoral work at a special education centre in Thailand focuses on the experience of family members participating in sessions with their children with special needs. Kaenampornpan draws attention to cultural differences which may impact on the dynamic of the therapeutic process. She concludes that the participation of family members played a central role in encouraging their child to engage in sessions and also helped the development of a partnership which enabled the therapist to gain a deeper understanding of the children's needs.

Changing attitudes to inclusion within the education system are discussed in chapter 15 by Motoko Hayata and John Strange. They describe clinical work undertaken in a mainstream school using 'inclusion' groups. Children with special educational needs were supported not only by staff but also mainstream pupils who acted as helpers. Using case studies the authors examine the benefits to disabled and non-disabled pupils and staff, and the intricacies of the helping relationships. A most interesting read particularly for therapists working in the education sector.

Tone Leinebo, paediatric nurse and music therapist, and music therapy professor Trygve Aasgaard present their work in a paediatric hospital department. Working with medical staff, parents and siblings in a variety of musical activities they demonstrate the ability of music to build bridges between people and to foster positive experiences for patients and families.

In the penultimate chapter of this volume entitled 'Someone else in the room; welcome or unwelcome?' Eleanor Richards focuses on the therapist's attachment perspective with specific focus on attachment to the patient, to a preferred approach and to theory. In part she reflects on attachment perspectives offered in earlier chapters. Using a supervision case study example, she considers how shared music making may help foster more secure attachments for all those involved in the therapeutic encounter.

The editors reiterate the aim of this book in the concluding chapter; namely, to demonstrate the important contribution that assistants and collaborators can make to music therapy. Some useful suggestions are offered in relation to student training courses such as devoting a module specifically to collaborative working with assistants and other professionals as well as planning placements in settings where collaborative working is likely. The need is identified for formal research and raising the profile of collaborative working via social media, journal articles and conference presentations.

This stimulating, informative volume contains a richly diverse source of material that must surely become essential reading on music therapy training courses. As well as addressing a gap in the literature, it points the reader towards a wealth of sources for further contemplation. If the well-trodden territory is in need of a map then this book is a signpost towards exploration of new pathways as we share the collaborative journey.

REFERENCES

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