



A Tribute to Robin Howat from the New Zealand Music Therapy Community

Claire Molyneux & Sarah Hoskyns

Reflecting on our experiences of working with Robin Howat in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, we write below about Robin's warm, generous personality and dedication to music therapy.

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Claire Molyneux:

Robin was a Trustee of the Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre (Auckland, New Zealand) and provided inspiration for the Centre when well-known singer-songwriter Hinewehi Mohi, her husband George, and daughter Hineraukatauri, who has severe cerebral palsy, visited the Golden Stave Centre. Robin's insight and guidance as a music therapist was invaluable in Raukatauri's early days and during one visit he was able to observe sessions delivered both at the Centre and in one of our outreach projects at a school for children with cerebral palsy. His feedback and observations were shared respectfully and greatly valued by the clinical team.

I had the privilege of staying with Robin and his family in 2009 as part of a visit to the Golden Stave Centre. Robin invited me to observe him at work in the therapy room and there was plenty of opportunity to discuss the various policies, procedures, research opportunities and multiple demands that come with operating a music

therapy centre. Robin was generous with his time, energy and resources and I was struck by his immense dedication to music therapy. I always find it rejuvenating to spend time visiting other music therapists which enables me to take a fresh look at my own practice; my time with Robin was no exception to this. His relaxed warmth in the therapy room seemed to come from a strong sense of purpose as a therapist and a joy in connecting with people, which was inspirational. The memories of Robin's passion for and commitment to music therapy will continue to motivate and inspire the work of the many therapists who knew him.

Sarah Hoskyns:

Robin and I met periodically for meetings in London of both the Association of Professional Music Therapists (APMT) committee and the Courses Liaison Committee in the late 1980s-early 1990s, which brought together heads and staff of training programmes to agree a basic module of training. The latter meetings were interesting but often quite tense as the pioneer heads of courses had developed 'their ways' which were not always compatible. It was also a time of intense competition between the three original London training programmes and negotiation and collaborative stances were needed. Robin was always warm, open and helpful as a colleague and was used to 'translating' for Sybil Beresford-Pierse (the first Director of the Nordoff-Robbins Centre in London) who was impatient with having to fit with APMT requirements. We often used to wink at each other as he helped to 'broker a deal' with Sybil.

Through working with Robin in this way, I recognised his real kindness, diligence and complete commitment to working with young people through music. His eyes always lit up with stories of practice and enjoyment of teaching, and he went out of his way to assist and provide information. More recently Robin was very helpful to my New Zealand colleague, violist Professor

Donald Maurice, who was researching a link with his research and one of Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins' early cases. Robin was very prompt and generous with his time.

We are very sad in New Zealand to have lost such an experienced and committed friend and colleague from our Australasian team. Music Therapy New Zealand President Daphne Rickson noted Robin's generous support of New Zealand music therapy over the years in a November obituary for the New Zealand MUST Newsletter (Rickson 2012), and particularly his memorable visit as keynote speaker for the annual New Zealand Society for Music Therapy conference in 1998. He will be much missed as kindred spirit and generous friend.

Reference

Rickson, D. (2012). NZ Music therapy community notes passing of Robin Howat and Michael McGuire. *MusT Newsletter*, November 2012. Retrieved from: www.musictherapy.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/MusT-November-2012.pdf

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