



Book Review

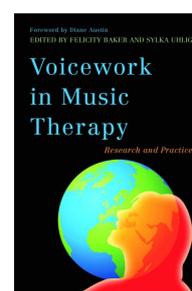
Voicework in Music Therapy: Research and Practice Felicity Baker & Sylka Uhlig (Editors)

Reviewed by Yasmine A. Iliya

Voicework in Music Therapy: Research and Practice

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Using the voice in music therapy is becoming an increasingly recognised tool for helping a wide range of clinical populations. *Voicework in Music Therapy: Research and Practice*, edited by Felicity Baker and Sylka Uhlig, is a comprehensive, detailed, and much-needed compilation of current voicework techniques in the field of music therapy. In her foreword, Dr. Diane Austin appropriately reminds us of the importance of using the voice, "the most intimate instrument of all" (p. 13). The book is divided into two main sections: structured approaches to voicework, and unstructured approaches to voicework. Each chapter presents a voicework technique with a specific clinical population, and the book concludes with a comparative analysis and model written by the editors. The contributing authors demonstrate expertise in their areas, and offer research-based,

technical, and practical guidance to practitioners on a diverse variety of vocal interventions. In addition, many chapters include beautifully described, client-centered case examples. The specificity of the voicework techniques and the range of populations discussed are important to music therapy students, researchers, and clinicians.

Introducing structured vocal interventions, Esther Thane (Chapter 2) describes her vocal-led relaxation method for children with autism spectrum disorders. In this articulate and detailed chapter, Thane reminds clinicians that directives can be sung instead of spoken. By using the voice, Thane "can have authentic expression and connectedness" (p. 60) with the children. The procedure guides children towards self-reflection through the following process: i) breath awareness and muscle relaxation, ii) self-awareness and

positive affirmation statements, and iii) concluding with a gentle wake up and transition. The chapter is rich with musical notation to aid the reader, and Thane also offers suggestions to apply the technique to other populations.

Sylka Uhlig (Chapter 3) transforms “aggressive shouting behavior into the structure of a rap song” (p. 65), aiding the emotional and cognitive development of at-risk children and adolescents. With structure, all vocal expression, including crying, “can help [children] to survive their often chaotic environments” (p. 65) and regulate aggression. The method is well-researched and the literature review is thorough. In terms of a clinical guide, the method is described in a table, which is easily-referenced.

Nicola Oddy (Chapter 4) documents her interesting research with people who had been told as children that they were not able to sing. Oddy developed a structured six day workshop inviting people to “rediscover their voices through introspective singing” (p. 83). The intention of rediscovery is sensitively described, and Oddy fills the chapter with musical notation of songs and chants as well as helpful ways to adapt the research into a clinical context.

Hyun Ju Chong (Chapter 5) adapts Korean culture into therapeutic purposes by describing *Sori* as a method of helping women with emotional trauma. *Sori* is “a form of singing [...] about various emotions related to life issues” (p. 101). The chapter includes detailed descriptions of the highly-structured technique, as well as a case example of a 55 year-old woman searching for self-growth and insight. Although Chong nicely integrates the traditional, cultural Korean healing approaches with clinical practice, this practice may be complicated for practitioners without personal experience in the *Sori* process.

Hanne Mette Ridder (Chapter 6) presents the polyvagal theory in describing voicework to increase social interaction in people with dementia. Developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, the *polyvagal* theory refers to the role of the tenth cranial nerve, the vagus, in different mammalian stress responses. Ridder connects the vagus to breathing, vocalisation, and communication, and asserts the need for safety to decrease the stress response in people with dementia. Using the human voice in a therapeutic context can increase social interaction, especially by singing familiar, predictable songs. Ridder brings great sensitivity to her chapter, and provides excellent connections between the brain, the voice, and the need to ensure safety for the clients. As she states, “the therapist’s voice is an important instrument and is used to signal a stable ground, a clear structure, and a secure frame” (p. 137).

Jeanette Tamplin (Chapter 7) demonstrates the uses of therapeutic singing and vocal interventions to improve respiratory function and voice projection for people with a spinal cord injury. Although respiratory impairments often lead to morbidity and mortality, vocal techniques can significantly strengthen vocal production, therefore improving one’s sense of well-being. This highly-educative chapter is full of technical details, and the methods are applicable to other disorders and populations. The appendix serves as an additional manual with techniques that are easy to understand and use.

Felicity Baker (Chapter 8) explains how vocal interventions can improve climax and cadence in the dysprosodic voice of people with traumatic brain injury. Baker states that “people with intonation impairments are at risk of being misunderstood [...] and are therefore predisposed to social isolation” (p. 171). Vocal exercises and singing familiar songs can increase verbal emotional expression by improving vocal flexibility, vocal range, and pitch. A case study further demonstrates Baker’s approaches. This chapter is technical, educative, and adds another population to the wide range discussed in the book.

Felicity Baker and Jeanette Tamplin (Chapter 9) show how song-based singing and rhythm-based voicework approaches coordinate respiration, vocalisation, and articulation in people with neurological damage. Singing and speech share similar neural mechanisms, which can help improve the speech in people with disorders such as apraxia and dysarthria. Baker and Tamplin describe various chants, melodic and rhythmic articulation exercises, and vocal intonation exercises. A case study of a woman recovering from a stroke showed that speech intelligibility, rate, pause time, and naturalness all improved following these voicework approaches.

Madeleen de Bruijn, Joost Hurkmans, and Tea Zielman (Chapter 10) bring a much-needed chapter on an interdisciplinary approach of speech-language therapy and music therapy for clients with aphasia and/or apraxia. Using melody and rhythm, Speech Music Therapy for Aphasia (SMTA) simultaneously integrates speech therapy and music therapy, with both therapists working together. Voicework can improve speech fluency by using a method that progresses from singing, to speaking words in a rhythmical chant, to finally speaking the words alone. The chapter includes detailed assessments and musical exercises to help clients learn sounds, words, and sentences.

Helen Shoemark (Chapter 11) introduces her free approach to voicework and vocal interplay, known as contingent singing, with hospitalised newborn infants. Shoemark reminds readers of “the

instinctive process of soothing and nurturing through the voice” (p. 231). Infants are receptive to auditory stimulation and interaction, which provides a positive experience and aids neurological development. Contingent singing includes responding to and maintaining interplay with the infants by singing semi-sung motifs and single-line melodies. Brief clinical examples nicely demonstrate Shoemark’s methods of witnessing and responding to infants using her voice.

Joanne Loewy (Chapter 12) outlines the technique of *tonal intervallic synthesis* to treat acute pain in medical music therapy. The chapter includes a literature review, and the method is explained in the context of a case example. By linking the human voice to the elements of frequency and vibrations in the body, Loewy skilfully describes how her method of toning with a Paiste gong helped a man suffering from pain and anxiety caused by bowel cancer.

Satomi Kondo (Chapter 13) beautifully describes her psychotherapeutic work with a woman with Parkinson’s disease. Kondo brings a psychodynamic and humanistic perspective by reminding us that “music therapy is not only about solving problems” (p. 269). Using an integration of the arts including vocal improvisation, painting, and poetry, the goals of the therapy were to increase self-understanding, creatively express feelings, and expand the client’s inner world. Kondo explains the various roles of the voice such as bridging the client to herself, her family, and her external world. Kondo’s chapter is a well-described and encouraging case study that is applicable to a variety of populations.

Inge Nygaard Pedersen (Chapter 14) brings another needed perspective to the book by offering voicework for self-awareness and self-regulation. Vocal sounds can function as self-objects. Through vocal improvisation, both therapists and clients can explore and challenge their sounds and expressions. Pedersen shares a clinical example where she and the client “worked solely with voice improvisations to search for inner resources and to recognise how to fill oneself up more steadily from the inside” (p. 296-297).

Susan Summers (Chapter 15) conveys a spiritual foundation in her method of voicework in hospice care that she calls “The Vocal Hello Space Model”. At the end of life, songs can offer important meaning for clients and their families, providing comfort, memories, and intergenerational connections. Summers offers helpful, detailed descriptions on matching breathing, humming and vocalising, and vocal improvisation. The lyrical vocal improvisation can be especially powerful, as Summers describes singing to clients phrases such

as: “your loved ones are here... it is OK to leave... we will be all right...” (p. 317).

Continuing in hospice care, Cheryl Dileo (Chapter 16) describes the uses and roles of the voice and the therapist with imminently dying patients. Dileo highlights five uses of the voice: the synchronised voice, the nurturing voice, the accompanying voice, the dialoguing voice, and the emoting voice. She focuses on goals such as slowing the patient’s breath rate, nurturing the patient, and helping the patient achieve relationship completion, with the “ultimate goal of all music therapy interventions [...] [being] to facilitate a good death” (p. 327). She closes the chapter with an emotional case example of accompanying a patient as she died.

The book ends with a concluding chapter (Chapter 17) written by the editors comparing and contrasting the aforementioned voicework interventions. The therapeutic aims, psychological frameworks, and methodological approaches of all the preceding authors are charted for easy referencing. In this broad and detailed chapter, Baker and Uhlig offer a final, powerful model of voicework in music therapy.

For any music therapist who appreciates the use of the voice, and for any music therapist who is looking to expand their practice to include voicework, this comprehensive book is extremely valuable. The greatest quality of the book is its breadth. It covers a wide variety of vocal interventions and populations and provides helpful, technical advice for practitioners. It is a highly significant and useful contribution to the field of music therapy, and reminds all clinicians about the innate power of the human voice.

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