



## Editorial

### It is the people

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He aha te mea nui o te ao  
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

What is the most important thing in the world?  
It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

This Māori proverb will resonate with music therapists throughout the world who dedicate their lives to working with people in and through music. This issue of *Approaches* has an emphasis on the exceptional offerings of people, and more particularly of music therapy pioneers, who have been significant contributors to the expansion of our discipline and professional community internationally.

Sadly this issue includes tributes to Jean Eisler, Carolyn Kenny, and Chava Sekeles who died during the past two years in close proximity to each other. These tributes celebrate the achievements of these three pioneers whose work has had an enormous impact on the lives of individuals, as well as on national and international communities.<sup>1</sup> These were musically gifted women, who exhibited extraordinary beauty, strength, and courage in their multi-faceted lives as artists, practitioners, teachers, mentors, collaborators, scholars, authors, and presenters. Each of them had a vital impact on the establishment and development of the music therapy profession. Their stories reflect the multiple and diverse skills music therapists bring to and develop during their music therapy endeavours, as well as demonstrating the primacy of building positive relationships and developing collaborations in order to get things

done. Throughout their lives each of them engaged in a variety of different, and often voluntary, tasks in order to bring music therapy to people who needed it.

The accomplishments of these extraordinary people are testament to the theme that living through adversity can strengthen one's understanding of music as a powerful and empowering resource for those in need and their communities. In these people's stories there are echoes of another familiar narrative: that the discovery of music therapy, often later in life and as a second or third career, can lead to passionate commitment to the profession. Combining love of music making with an already established career in a different field was – and perhaps still is – a typical route to becoming a music therapist. This can offer strong advantages in such a multi-faceted profession, which involves not only engaging and responding to people in music, but also thinking and writing, researching, and sharing through teaching, presentations and publications, as well as political activism.

In his book, *The Study of Music Therapy: Current Issues and Concepts*, reviewed in this edition by Colin Lee, Ken Aigen (2014) highlights the importance of learning from the contributions of pioneers in the field as he explores the balance and interface between music and therapy, and tracks the development and application of theory in music therapy since its inception as a discipline in the mid-1940s. Lee notes that music therapy has entered a period of immense growth in the last decade, with the profession becoming broader and more diverse

<sup>1</sup> The open access journal *Voices* recently published a special issue dedicated to the work of Carolyn Kenny (McFerran & Stige, 2018).

as new models and theories have emerged. Anthony Meadow's book (2011), for example, also reviewed in this edition by Florencia Grasselli, contains case studies from 47 music therapists who draw on many different theoretical frameworks and cultural backgrounds, to engage in research-based clinical work with people who have diverse needs, across the lifespan. The expansion of the field is also underscored in Luke Annesley's review of the third conference of the British Association for Music Therapy, *Music, Diversity and Wholeness*, where a range of practice, research and theory-led work was presented.

Our acknowledgement and engagement with the work of pioneers in the field is also reflected in Wilhelm and Wilhelm's article. Focusing on the work of Erwin Henry Schneider, the authors describe the impact of his teaching, writing and leadership in both music therapy and music education fields, noting especially his contribution to the establishment of the National Association of Music Therapy (NAMT) in the USA. In the book review section we can also read about the work of Ken Bruscia, an eminent theorist, researcher and author who has dedicated 25 years to conceptualising music therapy in a critically inclusive and integrated way. His third edition of *Defining Music Therapy* (Bruscia, 2014) emerged from collaboration with an international panel of experts, and the result is another outstanding example of individual and team achievement.

As editors of *Approaches*, we value highly the time and effort that people put into their practice, professional development and research, and their willingness to take that further by writing about their work and sharing it with others. As the journal completes its tenth volume and looks forward to the second decade of its life, the opening Māori proverb offers inspiration to our future work.

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