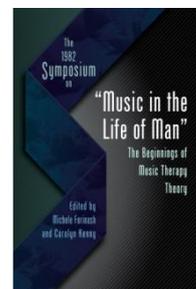


## BOOK REVIEW

# The 1982 symposium on ‘Music in the life of man’: The beginnings of music therapy theory (Forinash & Kenny, Eds.)

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**Title:** The 1982 symposium on ‘Music in the life of man’: The beginnings of music therapy theory **Editors:** Michelle Forinash & Carolyn Kenny **Publication year:** 2015 **Publisher:** Barcelona Publishers **Pages:** 96 **ISBN:** 9781937440794

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Over many years I have heard anecdotal reflections on the symposium held in 1982 on ‘Music in the Life of Man’. I have listened to reflections by those who were participants and those who were student observers, and all accounts have left me with the impression that this was truly a watershed moment in the evolution of music therapy theory and practice.

Thirty-three participants came from the four corners of the world to be part of this event. They represented music therapists (two-thirds) and others from adjacent fields (ethnomusicology, music psychology, music performance [voice and piano] and composers).

This slim volume was published in 2015, some 33 years after the event. What stands out about the publication is the layering of information and reflection of those involved coming from multiple perspectives. It is a study of the lived experience of the event, and as such illustrates a phenomenological perspective that is deep in meaning and understanding.

The editors, Michelle Forinash and Carolyn Kenny, begin the book with an outline of their involvement in the symposium; Carolyn a part-time professor at that time who was a participant, and Michelle a graduate assistant within the Masters programme at New York University (NYU).

The symposium was the brainchild of Professor Barbara Hesser, who had attended a previous gathering at Herdecke, Germany, in 1978. Carolyn reflects “little did I know that during those five days I would meet my professional tribe – a community of scholars” (p. 4), and Michelle recalled “my excitement and at times fear about meeting the leaders in music therapy” (p. 6).

Barbara Hesser garnered financial support for the project from the Musician’s Emergency Fund and NYU. She wrote that the focus of the meeting was

[...] to bring people of varied disciplines together with music therapists who all share a common interest in the musical experience as it refers to man and his life (his

education, growth and health). [...] a transdisciplinary symposium to explore the essence of our profession: how music affects the body, mind and spirit of man. (p. 8)

The structure of the book covers the significance of the gathering (chapter 1), notes taken after each person's presentation, the small group discussions, and the public presentations on the final day. Finally, there are reflections from the participants sometime after the symposium.

Each person had written a paper that was distributed to all 31 participants prior to the meeting. Although these papers were never made public, the student scribes took copious notes on the presentations, dutifully typing up the summaries at the end of the day on electric typewriters! In addition, participants wrote comments and reflections on cards at the end of each day.

The findings from the small group discussions focused on:

1. Illness and wellness in music experience
2. Encounters the self in music experience
3. Experience of time and rhythm in music therapy, and
4. Appropriate/acceptable approaches to studying music experience.

I was struck by the use of "wellness" considered by group 1. In their report on the final day they defined it then as "an optimal state of wholeness in the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual self" (p. 51). Group 4 put forward a diversified approach to research music therapy including case studies, correlational analysis and experimental models; phenomenology, semiotic and introspective approaches as well as meta-analyses (p. 62), an accurate prediction of where research methods would eventually evolve.

Other delights in this book are the references to paper copies of plane tickets being sent by snail mail to participants, typewriters "breaking down" and the use of "overheads" for the public presentations. An endearing quality of this volume can be found in the historical photographs of the pioneers of music therapy, circa 1982.

The book captures a moment in music therapy history that allows us to live the debates of the time and to reflect on the solid grounding this meeting gave to the subsequent development of music therapy theory and practice. It is a gem, and highly recommended to music therapists around the world.