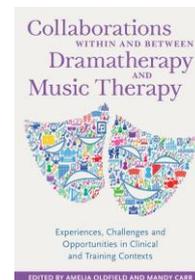


## BOOK REVIEW

# Collaborations within and between dramatherapy and music therapy: Experiences, challenges and opportunities in clinical and training contexts (Oldfield & Carr, Eds.)



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**Title:** Collaborations within and between dramatherapy and music therapy: Experiences, challenges and opportunities in clinical and training contexts **Editors:** Amelia Oldfield & Mandy Carr **Publication year:** 2018 **Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers **Pages:** 256 **ISBN:** 978-1-78592-135-3

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As a dramatherapist who has worked for a decade in an arts therapies team in the NHS alongside music therapists, and now works for a company run jointly by a dramatherapist and music therapist, I read this book with anticipation, as I have always thought it strange, as the book says, that literature about our relationship is so limited. I am in a Playback Theatre Company with dramatherapist Gillian Downie and music therapist Robin Wiltshire, who wrote about the ways they worked collaboratively, co-facilitating a cross-modality group (Downie & Wiltshire, 2018). When we work together, we are often teasing each other about playing outside our comfort zones and encouraging each other to try new skills. Overall, that is the sense I took from the book; it is full of encouraging examples of how to be playful in the use of music and drama, how to try new ways of doing things. It explores this from a clinical and training perspective, as well as looking at how to evoke change by moving ourselves, other professionals, our clients and trainees out of our comfort zones in a safe way.

In addition, there is an interesting angle offered from the perspective of training establishments. As there is no dramatherapy course offered at the university most local to my practice (University of South Wales), I was fascinated to read about the training contexts and different styles of learning environments offered at Anglia Ruskin University in England and the Karol Szymanowski Academy in Katowice, Poland. It was inspiring to consider new possibilities, alongside

the detailed practical information; it opened up the possibility of new conversations when considering how to develop new training opportunities.

The book is particularly useful for trainees and newly qualified arts therapists and for its potential to be used in a training capacity. Most of the clinical examples are based around work with children and individuals with learning disabilities or autism. In addition, Jane Jackson and Christine West give examples of work with older adults, and Konieczna-Nowak's focus is on young people living in "socially deprived areas" (p. 167). The literature reviewed in all chapters is exceptionally thorough, but I began to skim-read these as they covered a range of underpinning theoretical material. Whilst useful from an academic perspective, they did not offer me any new material. I would like to praise the writers and editors, however, for this exceptional quality confirms the extent to which the arts therapies can be framed by a range of schools of thought. Again, this could be useful in all arts therapies training and service development. It could aid other professionals and families to gain a deeper understanding when learning why we work in the way that we do. The necessity of this in a climate where, certainly in the UK, arts therapies are feeling isolated or threatened is alluded to by Jennings (p. 26), Jackson (p. 70) Amelia Oldfield (pp. 119, 124 & 126), Ellinor and Georgaki (pp. 131 & 145) and Dokter and Odell-Miller (pp. 188-189 & 200).

For this reason, I chose not to read the book in a linear way, and read the chapters more haphazardly, reading the parts that drew my attention first. As a more established dramatherapist, what I enjoyed reading most were the historical stories by Jennings, and Dokter and Odell-Miller. The unique collaborations in 'Love Songs for My Perpetrator: A Musical Theatre-Based Drama Therapy Performance Intervention in the USA' (Reynolds & Davis) and the dramatherapy and music therapy project in Poland (Konieczna-Nowak), which also had a performative aspect, were fascinating too. Reynolds and Davis describe their love of musical theatre and how they conceive, create and perform their own musical to explore the history of their own personal process and trauma as therapists. Discussing the influence of therapeutic theatre and self-revelatory performance defined by Renee Emunah, they state "Upon reflection, we believe our piece was deliberately both types of therapeutic theatre at once" (p. 154).

Similarly, the project in Poland describes a "reality-oriented model" and a "metaphor-oriented model" (p. 170). It seems in both these chapters that the collaborative use of drama and music has enabled the possibility of improvising and developing innovative, inspirational ways of working. The coming together of modalities offers a stronger holding container in which imagination can thrive. Many of the authors comment that this process does not only enable the client in finding their voice, but also themselves. Konieczna-Nowak shares "For me as a music therapist, seeing dramatherapy in action, and working with other professionals is always inspiring, and I bring fresh ideas to all my work, also in the purely music area" (p. 183).

Oldfield's chapter 'Humour, Play, Movement and Kazoos' was very easy to read and made me smile. On the first day I met my new team, one of the music therapists taught me how to play the kazoo and it broke the ice, bringing much laughter. I immediately felt less nervous within my new team, who have also written about working collaboratively (Cropper & Godsall, 2016). Oldfield offers clinical examples of those first moments of attachment and states "[in] these examples sound, music and humour are closely interwoven, and the efficacy of the interaction is dependent on the combination of these three elements" (p. 115).

The outcomes of working with both drama and music as a music therapist and dramatherapist are shown to be beneficial especially newly found freedom and spontaneity through creative expression and play. Improved communication and understanding, language skills and non-verbal competencies, as well as improved emotional communication and interpersonal communication are described. Increased motivation, choice and autonomy are reported. Improved kinaesthetic and musical rhythmic awareness, increased reflective ability and opportunity to experience feelings of trust, confidence and enjoyment are echoed throughout. The book illustrates that whether you are meeting with a new-born, an 80-year-old or anyone in between, dramatherapists and music therapists have so much to offer each other, positively influencing clinical content and peer support and supervision.

I am writing this whilst shielding during lockdown due to Covid-19, and one of the things that has kept me sane is the access to musical theatre and theatre productions on screen. Watching a live performance of a musical or play on the screen added a different dimension to the experience. It is a good metaphor for the experience of reading this book; reading, in print, a written production of a live creative relationship which has led to collaboration and innovation rather than cuts and competition. It certainly inspired me to be a fellow pioneer and to dig out my kazoo!

## REFERENCES

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