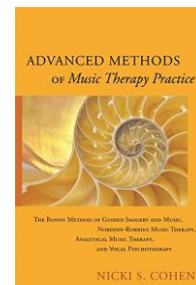


BOOK REVIEW

Advanced methods of music therapy practice: Analytical music therapy, the Bonny method of Guided Imagery and Music, Nordoff-Robbins music therapy and Vocal Psychotherapy (Cohen)



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Title: Advanced methods of music therapy practice: Analytical music therapy, the Bonny method of Guided Imagery and Music, Nordoff-Robbins music therapy and Vocal Psychotherapy **Author:** Nicki Cohen **Publication year:** 2018 **Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers **Pages:** 248 **ISBN:** 978-1-84905-776-9

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As a music therapy professor, I have had contact with different methods or approaches through lectures or brief workshops, as I always believed that it is important to have and pass on information to students about the existence of different theoretical paths and possible training for the professional. However, it is known that the main training in methods, approaches or models in music therapy are not available in all regions of the world and, for the most part, they are carried out in the English language.

The book *Advanced Methods of Music Therapy Practice*, from music therapist Nicki S. Cohen, can assist in widening the potential for music therapists to become aware of alternative methods and models. It explores the author's current view of some of the recognised methods applied in music therapy clinical practice.

In the preface, the author's narrative draws attention to her own life, which has always been centred on music. Her training in the Bonny method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) led her to consider herself a "better teacher, therapist, citizen and person" (p.13). The motivation to write the

book was to answer why, for the author, it was necessary to go deeper into music therapy by doing advanced training in one of the methods to understand the full potential of the profession. To answer this question, she chose four of what she considers to be the main methods: Analytical Music Therapy (AMT), the Bonny method of GIM, the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy (NR-MT) and Vocal Psychotherapy (VP). She states that they were methods “whose practices are comprehensive and psychodynamic in nature [...] In most cases these methods are taught outside of the general parameters of any Music Therapy Academic degree requirements” (p. 14). I am aware, though, that in some countries the Nordoff-Robbins method is not considered advanced and is core to the teaching of our profession. This was not considered by the author, which is somewhat surprising.

An exclusive component of the book is giving voice to renowned professionals involved in these methods by having them answer a series of questions. Some challenges are pointed out by the author, such as the choice of the interviewed music therapists; the definition of the term method, used since as the title of this work; and the differences between American and British English because the author “discovered a major discrepancy between the two countries regarding the usage and perception of the terms advanced, post-graduate and method” (p.15).

In the opening section, one of the author’s conclusions is that, with the advances of the profession in the United States, new perspectives in research, new clientele and governmental changes will make it impossible in the future to practice music therapy without having a Master’s degree. This already happens with other healthcare professions and is also the case in some countries currently. The author points out that, although the United States and the United Kingdom are pioneers in the insertion of music therapy in training programs and as professional practices, there are different terms used, levels of academic training, different overall standards and different ways to standardise music therapy practice.

Early on in the text, Cohen justifies the use of the term “method” for the topic of advanced music therapy practice in the context of the first quarter of the 21st century. It presents a reflection on the terms “theory,” “model” and “method” in music therapy, bringing theorists from the field such as Even Ruud, Kenneth Bruscia, Leslie Bunt, Brynjulf Stige, Thayer Gaston and Kenneth Aigen, among others. She comments that a music therapist who chooses to train in an advanced method of music therapy tends to make this decision after years as a clinician.

Thus, the choice of the four aforementioned methods was because they were created by music therapists, in addition to fulfilling strict criteria:

- 1) Master’s degree, or training occurring concurrently with Master’s degree candidacy; 2) specified years of clinical experience prior to beginning the training; and 3) a time-intensive process that includes multiple workshops, clinical hours, supervised sessions, self-growth requirements, personal sessions, reading assignments, and final projects to complete the training and to receive the corresponding clinical designation (p. 69).

To explore these, the author states that she used techniques related to transcendental realism, covering questions about insertion, historical development, current formation, practice and the existing literature on each of the methods. Thus, section 2 is subdivided into chapters dedicated to

explaining the chosen methods and presenting their creators. To write the chapter on AMT, Cohen spoke with Mary Priestley's son, John Priestley, as his mother, at the time, was already ninety years old and very ill.

The author explains some techniques developed by Mary Priestley, commenting that "with its strong theoretical foundations are the indigenous AMT techniques so skilfully developed by Mary and her colleagues" (p.85). These techniques can be organised into the following categories: consciousness probing, accessing the unconscious and ego strengthening. In addition, in this chapter, the main techniques, the description of an observed AMT session, the training and the list of some writings are presented. A search undertaken by the author for AMT resources revealed that most of these writings are authored by Benedikte Scheiby. Regarding the future, AMT points to a discrete therapeutic approach because of the "current lack of available trainers" (p. 93). However, she recognises that the techniques and elements of the method have been incorporated in different universities and countries and new client groups have been treated by music therapists trained in the method.

When writing about GIM, the author reports that this was "a labor of love" (p.95) for her because Helen was her teacher, mentor and friend until her death in 2010. She presents Helen's story and how she came to create the GIM Method. It is curious to say that, in the 1970s, many members of the National Association for Music Therapy (NAMT) criticised Bonny's work, for relating music therapy to spirituality, an aspect so recognised and linked to the method later on. The author believes that the new generation of professionals in the American and European Associations (AMI – Association for Music and Imagery, and EAMI – European Association for Music and Imagery) will help to form new generations of Bonny method practitioners.

A later chapter focuses on NR-MT, starting from the lives of its founders, Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins, who preferred to call their creation an "approach". The author recalls a remarkable moment in her life when she watched the 1976 film *The Music Child*. For this book, three renowned music therapists linked to this method were interviewed: Alan Turry, Kenneth Aigen and Gary Ansdell. For Cohen, NR-MT is clearly the advanced method that requires the highest level of musical skills from music therapists.

Then, in chapter 7, the author presents the method of VP, drawn from an interview with the creator Diane Austin. The techniques were created "over time and are aligned with different theoretical constructs that Diane studied in the 1980s and 1990s" (p. 149). Music has always been the centre of Austin's life, who also studied theatre. In collaboration with music therapist Barbara Hesser, Diane established training in VP at New York University (NYU).

Based on the formation and trajectory of Diane Austin, the author presents the techniques of this eminently vocal method, which is analytically oriented. A video found by Cohen with a "*free associative singing session*" is commented upon. In addition to these topics, training in VP is presented, which uses breathwork, natural sounds, vocal improvisation, chants and songs: "Each training group is limited to eight students per year. It takes a student a minimum of two years to complete VP training" (p. 159). Finally, the chapter presents the texts published by Diane Austin and other professionals.

Section 3 includes the analyses of interviews held with music therapists discussing these methods. It is interesting to note that the only founder of these methods among the interviewees was music therapist Diane Austin. The respondents observed how the four methods had taught them about

depth. Regarding the changes in the relationship between the interviewees and the method over the years, Cohen says: "some of the major themes I discerned were personal reconstruction, relationships with music, amendments, roots, and new populations" (p. 175). The final chapter makes a relevant contribution to the book, as it analyses the last two questions asked to professionals, which are related to the future of advanced methods and the music therapist profession itself. The first, considered by Cohen as the most potent question, was about the method being part of the practice of music therapy. All respondents believe that the methods covered in the book are part of the practice of music therapy. The biggest barrier to their greater use is that, for the most part, they are taught outside universities and, usually, training takes place after academic training. For the author, there is no forecast for these methods to be included inside universities "as they don't seem to fit the purview of most academic programs" (p. 191). Another point cited is that few experts are trained in more than one method.

Regarding the questions about the future, some experts are concerned with the continuity of the method after their deaths, but others are confident that the method will survive. This may include conducting research and training that uses the methods to connect with students from around the world.

As a final note, the book has interesting appendices that contribute to readers' knowledge since it describes a list of publications regarding the three of the cited advanced methods, with authorship of their creators and of other professionals.

Finally, Cohen's book takes us through the past, present and future of music therapy, allowing the reader, in addition to knowing the advanced methods presented, to reflect on their life experiences and their own trajectory as a music therapist. What will be the next step? A careful reading of *Advanced Methods of Music Therapy Practice* can bring inspiration.