

## BOOK REVIEW

# Early theoretical writings on music therapy: 1951-1960 (American Music Therapy Association with introductions by Bruscia)

Reviewed by Kathleen M. Murphy

State University of New York at New Paltz, USA



**Title:** Early theoretical writings on music therapy: 1951-1960 **Author:** American Music Therapy Association with introductions by Kenneth E. Bruscia **Publication year:** 2018 **Publisher:** Barcelona Publishers **Pages:** 218 **ISBN:** 9781945411373

### REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

**Kathleen M. Murphy**, PhD, MT-BC is Program Director of Music Therapy Graduate Studies, at the State University of New York at New Paltz, USA. She earned a PhD in Music Therapy from Temple University, Philadelphia, USA. She has over 35 years of clinical experience most recently focusing on music therapy in addictions and trauma. [murphyk@newpaltz.edu]

### Publication history:

Submitted 17 Sep 2019

Accepted 17 Oct 2019

First published 10 Feb 2020

*Early Theoretical Writings on Music Therapy: 1951-1960* is a compilation of articles written during the early development of music therapy in the United States. Kenneth E. Bruscia selected articles for this volume from the yearly *Music Therapy: Book of Proceedings of the National Association for Music Therapy* (NAMT). Each *Book of Proceedings* (1950-1962) contained full papers presented at NAMT's annual conference. As noted by Bruscia, the papers within these volumes "covered significant topics on theory, research, and practice that were evolving during the association's early years of growth" (p. xi). The papers chosen for this book focus on the early theoretical writings that laid the foundation for the development of current theoretical ideas related to music and therapy, health, and wellness.

The book is divided into 11 chapters, each containing the writings of a single author including Ira Altshuler (psychiatrist), Rudolf Dreikurs (psychiatrist), Arthur Flagler Fultz (practicing music therapist & academic program director), E. Thayer Gaston (music therapist & educator), Marcus Hahn (professor of music education), Thomas Klink (minister), Hans Kohut (psychoanalyst), Jules Masserman (psychiatrist and psychoanalyst), Leonard B. Meyer (composer and philosopher), Peter F. Oswald (psychiatrist) and Wayne W. Ruppenthal (music therapist). It is interesting to note that most authors were not music therapists. These non-music therapists, however, had an interest in music and therapy. As Bruscia suggests, consultation with this diverse group of professionals helped NAMT's founders begin to articulate the health promoting benefits of music in or as therapy (p. xii).

Each chapter is organised in a similar format beginning with a brief biography of the author and a bibliography of his works (when available). This introductory material is followed by articles written by the author that were published in a volume of *Book of Proceedings*. Each article is preceded by a

preview, a concise summary of the article and a commentary which contains a reflection of the article in terms of today's thinking about music therapy. Bruscia explains that when reading each of these writings he moved between two time locations, locating himself in the past without the knowledge gained over the past 60 years, and then in the present cognisant of today's understandings of music therapy. This reflection gave rise to two interesting points; many of the ideas expressed 1) provide the foundation for current music therapy practice, or 2) have been eschewed by current music therapy theorists without further development.

The writings in this book provided the foundation for music therapy theory, clinical practice and research in the early development of music therapy in the United States. It is interesting to see the foundations of music therapy practice and to locate these early ideas in the context of contemporary music therapy practice. Each pioneer laid a seed that in some cases has been expanded upon in the development of music therapy theory and clinical practice either in the United States or in the international music therapy community, and sometimes in both. In other instances, ideas presented are ripe for further development, as can be seen below.

Fultz (Chapter 3), Gaston (Chapter 4), and Kohut (Chapter 7) discuss how theories from related disciplines may be used to support music therapy practice. Fultz and Gaston lay the groundwork for a cognitive behavioural orientation to music therapy, an approach to music therapy practice that is common among music therapists working in the United States today (Silverman, 2014). Kohut, though, writes from a psychoanalytic perspective. It is hard to know how this particular article influenced music therapy practice in the United States as most music therapists report working from a cognitive-behavioural or humanistic theoretical orientation (Silverman, 2014). Psychoanalytic understandings of music and music therapy are more common in European schools of music therapy thought and clinical practice (Davies & Richards, 2002). As noted by Bruscia in the commentary, Klink's (Chapter 6) writings introduce the reader to many of the ideas espoused by contemporary theorists such as ritual, the creative now, and the notion that music therapy is a process rather than a behavioural operation (p. 127).

Hahn (Chapter 5) and Ostwald (Chapter 10) focus on the importance of understanding musical perception. Hahn notes that musical perception is impacted by personality, culture, musical training, and association. Ostwald points out that sound and music are perceived through similar physiological process, but notes that music adds expression, aesthetic standards, and is responsive to the social needs of the audience. Both authors note that that disability, disease, or mental disorders may impact how individuals perceive music. However, this has not been adequately researched to date in music therapy.

Altschuer (Chapter 1) and Klink (Chapter 6) present ideas that are currently used in clinical applications of music therapy, including Altschuer's concept of the "iso principle" (Altshuler, 1948). This principle continues to be cited in the music therapy literature, and in fact, has been expanded in Dileo's (2018) work with entrainment and Ridder's (2019) notions of resonance in music therapy. Klink is the first author to discuss the importance of having a here-and-now focus, being attuned, and responding to what is happening in the moment when working in group settings. These concepts are further discussed in several chapters of *Music Therapy Group Work: Sound Company* (Davies & Richards, 2002).

Meyer's article (Chapter 9) introduces the importance of understanding the role of music in a client's culture into music therapy discourse. His view on the importance of musical culture seemed to lie dormant for many years. Recently, however, there has been a call to understand the cultural significance of the music and instruments that are used in music therapy sessions (Borgo, 1998; Rudnow, 1994) as well as other cultural attributes such as ethnicity, religion, gender, and gender identity.

The remaining chapters respond to the question: "Why music therapy?" A common response to this question, even today, is that music therapy is a non-verbal, non-threatening treatment modality. The writings of Dreikurs (Chapter 2), Masserman (Chapter 8) and Ruppenthal (Chapter 11) offer support for this response. Dreikurs and Masserman also discuss the social aspect of music engagement noting that interpersonal relationships are often developed in music therapy groups.

*Early Theoretical Writings on Music Therapy: 1951-1960* makes a valuable contribution to the music therapy literature in that it helps the reader to understand the origins of music therapy theory in the United States. The ideas presented in several chapters, reflect the movement away from psychodynamic approaches towards cognitive behavioural approaches that was happening in the United States at the time these chapters were written. Additionally, most of the chapters lay the groundwork for further development of the theories that support music therapy.

In reading this book, it is important to remember that these chapters were written by men, some of whom emigrated from Europe to America, and others who were American. It is disconcerting to realise that the voice of prominent women in music therapy at the time were not included among the theoretical writings that Bruscia drew from. It is impossible to go back in time to know exactly why this was the case, though this was probably also common practice among all disciplines at the time these papers were presented. Perhaps a historical collection of writings of the female pioneers of music therapy is warranted.

## REFERENCES

- Altshuler, I. M. (1948). A psychiatrist's experiences with music as a therapeutic agent. In D. M. Schullian & M. Schoen (Eds.) *Music and Medicine* (pp. 266-2281). Oxford: Henry Schuman.
- Borgo, D. (1998). Can blacks play Klezmer? Authenticity in American ethnic musical expression. *Sonneck Society for American Music*, 24(2). Retrieved from: [http://music.ucsd.edu\\*dborgo/research/cbpk.htm](http://music.ucsd.edu*dborgo/research/cbpk.htm)
- Davies, A., & Richards, E. (Eds.). (2002). *Music therapy and group work sound company*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Dileo, C. (2018, September). *Pain management in music therapy*. In-service presentation, Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, New Orleans, LA.
- Ridder, H. M (2019, June). *Fields of resonance*. Opening talk presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> European Music Therapy Conference, Aalborg, Denmark.
- Rudinow, J. (1994). Race, ethnicity, expressive authenticity: Can white people sing the blues? *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52(1), 127-137.
- Silverman, M. J. (2014). A descriptive analysis of supervision in psychiatric music therapy. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 32, 194-200.