

INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC THERAPY

by Melinda Moore Meigs

Music Therapy is practised in a wide variety of settings and with individuals and groups who have vastly different needs.

By using music creatively in a clinical setting, the therapist seeks to establish a shared musical experience leading to the pursuit of therapeutic goals. Depending on the type of setting in which the music therapist is employed, he or she will work closely with parents, medical or educational staff, and other members of a therapeutic or multidisciplinary team.

Greek Tragedy

I perceive a link between Music Therapy and Humanistic Psychology in the shared belief of the therapeutic value and benefit of contacting and expressing deeply felt and often conflicting emotions. Music Therapy is not new. Perhaps it made its first appearance in Greek tragedy. The alternation of text and song corresponds to the shifting back and forth from left and right sides of the brain, with integrative effects. Music gave access to the seemingly unfathomable reality underlying the world of phenomena. Music could speak to the dark and irrational underside of human nature.

The Greeks, being a precocious and sensitive race, seemed to suffer greatly under the tension between desperate emotional vulnerability and great intellectual prowess. For coping with this unbearable tension and for protecting themselves against being destroyed by it, they evolved a form of art in which music, the Dionysiac in man, is merged into the ostensibly rational Apollonian in structured language. There was movement from inarticulate sound to poetic language. Aristotle defined Greek tragedy in his *Poetics* as "the imitation of serious and purposeful action of sufficient magnitude, which achieves through pity and terror the purgation of passions of that kind. This is achieved partly with poetry and partly with music, in language rendered pleasing by its metre and its versification". The music drama of the Athenians was a therapeutic invention which could allow an audience to release powerful emotions and to remain safe in the twilight between ritual and reason, sacrament and reality.

Music Therapy in Britain

A potted history of Music Therapy in Britain begins in the mid - 1950's, with therapists working at St. Bernard's Psychiatric Wing of Ealing Hospital and at St. Lawrence's Hospital in Catherham, Surrey. The British Society for Music Therapy was founded in 1958 by Juliette Alvin, who defined Music Therapy as : "The clinical and remedial use of music in the treatment, education and rehabilitation of children and adults suffering from emotional, physical or mental handicap". She had the vision that music could unite beauty, science and compassion.

Ten years later, in 1968, the first training course opened at the Guildhall School of Music. About this same time, Mary Priestly joined the staff at St. Bernard's and during the 1970's developed her work in Analytical Music Therapy (See her book *Music Therapy in Action*). She invented her own type of relaxation group which included imaginative movement and discussion. Together with Peter Wright who joined St. Bernard's in about 1973, they challenged the previous practices and definitions of Music Therapy. Before they developed their ideas and began using improvisation as a tool for inner exploration, Music Therapy was often more akin to entertainment and diversion - a sort of "cheer-up" hour for patients.

Ideas about improvisation developed over time. Originally, improvisation meant that a client would do the improvising, usually on a percussion instrument, with the therapist as his accompanist at the piano. Later, the mutual and simultaneous improvising of both therapist and client came into being. Improvisation is now one of the major tools for exploring clients' and therapists' feelings. To improvise implies being in the moment, being open and receptive to what may emerge, being free enough to put aside at least temporarily, musical and emotional expectations. To improvise means meeting the client where he or she is and building a bridge of communication through sound where deep distress and profound joy can be shared.

Nordoff - Robbins

Paul Nordoff, an American composer and pianist who died in 1977 devoted the greater part of his working life to developing his own techniques to meet the needs of children with handicaps. He drew attention to the relationship between the basic element of music - rhythm, melody and the combination of melodic tones resulting in harmony - to us as human beings. We live and move in rhythm (heart-beat, breathing, walking) and we express ourselves in tone through sounds, speech, song, laughter and crying.

Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins began working together in 1959 at Sunfield Children's Home in Worcestershire. They worked in many countries, published *Therapy in Music for Handicapped Children*, and created a body of work which has become the basis for a number of centres, including the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre in Kentish Town, which opened in 1982. The centre is home to one of the three major training courses in Music Therapy.

Music Therapy is now an established profession and has developed into a para-medical one within the Department of Health. One of the reasons that Music Therapy has been accepted in this way is that music can be demonstrated to have definite effects on the physical body. High frequencies cause muscles to tense; low frequencies induce muscles to relax. Rhythmic music provokes motor activity; neutral, non-associative music leads to neural calmness. High intensity of sound stimulates aggressive reactions, while low intensity of sound is pacifying.

Brain scans reveal that music produces complicated left/right lobal activity, and that for musicians, the activity is intense in both lobes. In non-musicians, it seems that the right lobe is more active than the left when listening to music. Distribution

of electrical activity is different for singing and for listening to music. Memorising a song seems to involve electrical patterns which differ significantly from both singing and listening.

Getting the balance between all of these elements creates the greatest re-charging effects. Research on vibro-acoustic treatment for multi-handicapped people is being carried out at Harperbury Hospital in Herts, by a music therapist, Anthony Wigram, and a physiotherapist, Lynn Weekes, who have contributed to this issue of *Self and Society*.

Training

In order to become a qualified Music Therapist in the U.K., it is necessary to complete one of the three, full-time (one year post-graduate) training courses recognised by the Department of Education and Science. These are the Licentiate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Music Therapy), The City University Diploma in Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, and the Diploma in Music Therapy at Roehampton Institute of Higher Education.

In preparing the material for this issue of *Self and Society*, I have been aware that many music therapists are unfamiliar with the ideas and practices of Humanistic Psychology. Equally, many members of AHP and AHPP are unfamiliar with Music Therapy as it is now taught and practised. It is my belief that both groups could be of use and benefit to each other. Perhaps an area for future development would be the introduction of the ideas of Humanistic Psychology into the workshops, conferences and courses of Music Therapy, and vice versa.

MUSIC HEALING

Peter Wright

There are two distinct traditions of Music Therapy. One is of ancient origin whilst the other is the modern approach. There are some major difficulties between them, but they both have a great deal to teach us. The older tradition's foundations lie in shamanism and religious philosophy; the newer form of Music Therapy is based upon a medical model to which it is largely an adjunct.

At present there seems to be an unfortunate situation in that both these streams of Music Therapy are flourishing separately, with very little cross-fertilisation between them. Indeed, there is often complete ignorance of the one concerning the other. With this in mind, let us look at what the older form of Music Therapy - now frequently called 'music healing' - is like and see what it could offer us.

Firstly, the underlying assumptions of music healing include the idea that sound was, and is, considerably more important to human beings and the world than has