

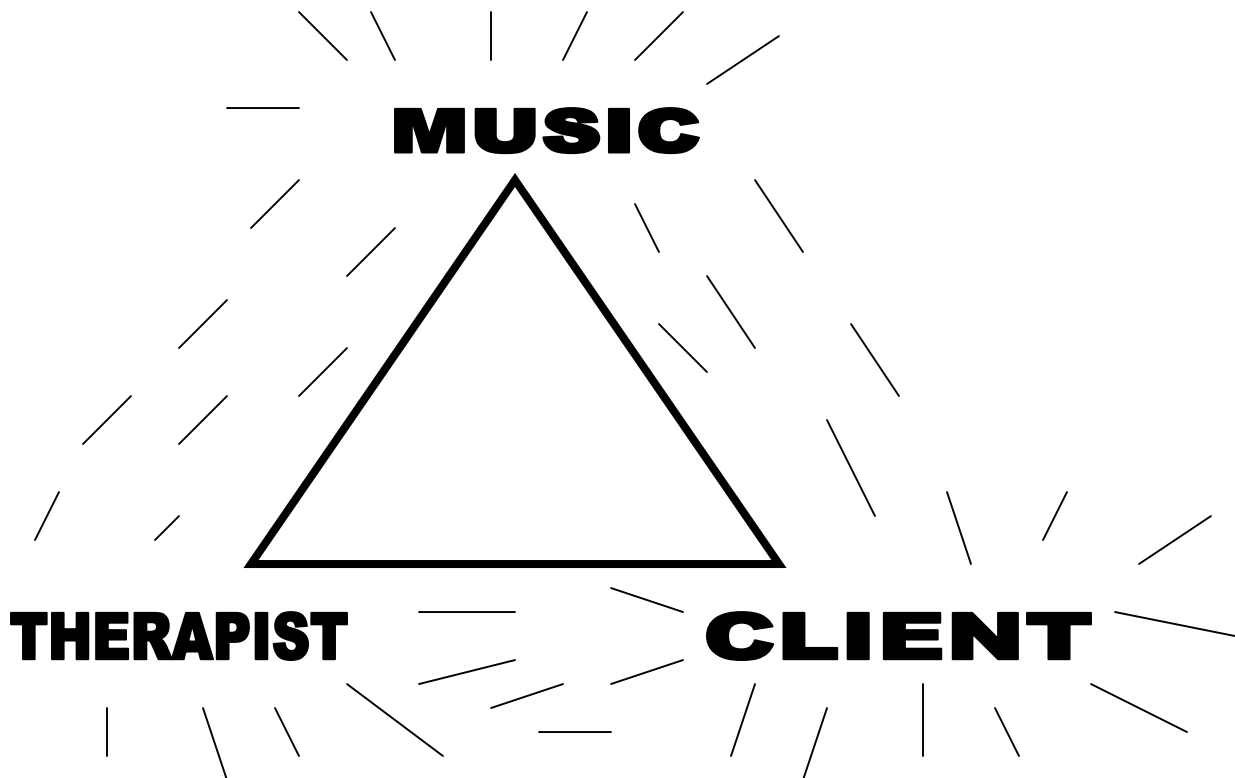
## Music, The Powerful Connector

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It's a great honour to be speaking to you today as one of the conference keynote speakers. I would like to spend the first half hour sharing some thoughts and personal associations with you about our conference theme, "Creating Connections". In the second part we will more closely examine the music/client/therapist connections in some case examples from work using the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music. I will discuss more about this method later.

Our conference theme, "Creating Connections", names a process which is central to our work.. As Music Therapists we are called to make connections, with our clients, with co-workers, within our facilities, and communities. It's our job. Many of these connections are complex and are varied.

Let's look at this diagram of an interaction process in music therapy, a triangular form which is familiar to most of us. It is built on the interconnections between the music at one point of the triangle, to the client(s) at another point, to the therapist at the third point. It is also based on the intraconnections within each point on the triangle, the connections within the music, within the client, and within us, as music therapists. We are required to find the balance place between all these connections otherwise problems will occur. For example, if we focus too much on performing the music, we might forget about the client's needs.



For a few moments, let's take a look at the therapist point in the triangle, knowing of course, that none of these points is in isolation, each has a direct influence on, and is influenced by the others. What is our personal history that shapes us, that shapes our values, our interests, our skills, that leads us to become Music Therapists in the first place? For myself, I grew up in a home where my mother was largely a caretaker, for both her parents who lived with us for many years until they died, for my father who had a heart condition for years, and for me. My grandfather who lived with us was a fiery Welsh musician. In my family it was expected that I would carry on the music tradition. My father, a fiery Irishman, who couldn't sing a note in tune, but loved to listen and dance to music, was a poet in his soul, who taught me at age three, to marvel at the magnificence of a sunset from the top of our apartment building in Montreal. So these are some of my early connections which led me to this profession. What are some of yours?

What is your connection to your music? What music do you love, and when are you in touch with those transformational moments of pure joy, free of critical self-judgment? For myself, I have to be honest in saying that I really do not love solo performing, yet I love making music in a group. (Perhaps too many "fiery" expectations from the early days, with which I still grapple.) When we are in a state of love in our music making our clients definitely feel it and are affected by it and vice versa!

What is your connection to your emotions? to your beliefs about the possibility of lasting therapeutic growth and change? to your own body? to your spirituality, in whatever form that may take for you? As a Gestalt therapist I believe that it is best to express our emotions and then move through them, not avoid them. I also know that this is not always possible and not for everyone. I'm aware that I know very little about the mystery of being human, about what each individual needs for change at any given moment. I do know that change is possible and that I can bring that view to the therapeutic relationship as a foundation. Candace Pert, the noted neuroscientist, has written a very interesting book, "Molecules of Emotion". She states that how we think and feel informs the cells of our bodies, influencing our state of health, and that our bodies have emotional receptors all over, not just in the limbic system of the brain. Many of the ancient traditions have stated similar views, saying that our thoughts, our emotions and our physical bodies must be clear vehicles for use in healing practices. In other words, the connections we make to what we think, feel, emotionally and physically and spiritually, will influence our lives, and in particular, our work as music therapists. The clearer we are, the greater chance our clients have of finding their own clarity. What personal challenges we have in being music therapists!

Now let's take a brief look at the connections we have to our clients, who have their own unique inner connections to their capabilities, their challenges, their values, their music, and to their own readiness for growth and change. Much has been written about the therapeutic alliance in music therapy and in other professions. In the Autumn 2001

publication of the Journal of Palliative Care, devoted to music therapy, and co-edited by Deborah Salmon and Mary Rykov, Deborah writes of the sacred space of the music therapy session, where the establishment of trust is a high priority, and where ordinary awareness may be expanded allowing for transformational experiences. Carolyn Kenny in her book "The Field of Play", (please see her colour diagram opposite page 90 in Field of Play) also views the connecting musical place between client and therapist as sacred space. In the violet space in between the two intersecting circles, both the client (or client group) and therapist are considered to be aesthetic beings, or human "fields" of beauty, meeting in this sacred musical space, connecting, interacting and being changed by each other in the process. The other coloured circles overlaid here represent other ingredients of this relationship, for example, ritual space, power and creative process. We Music Therapists know that when we arrive at this place in the music with our clients, a small or large part of us is changed forever... that feeling of "being in the groove" with someone, like souls connecting.

And now we come to that third point in the triangle, the music. How do the connections within the music affect its connections outward? What are the harmonic connections, the rhythmic, the timbral, the dynamic connections, the silences between the notes, the connections of one movement to another? In my opinion, one of Helen Bonny's unique gifts is her ability to hear music, to hear potential connections, to combine various movements of larger works into GIM programs where the keys and timbres and general mood all have cohesion and therapeutic potency. And what type of connection is music creating for the hearers? Do they have thoughts, or memories, or physical responses, or emotions, or uplifting spiritual experiences? Kevin Kirkland, editor of the MTABC Drumbeat, stated in the Fall 2001 edition on Spirituality and Music, "Music, in its ability to be invisible does not immediately reveal its full significance to the listener.... We are often inspired to create and bestow meaning from within ourselves." (page 5.) Helen Bonny uses the cut log diagram to understand how we humans can connect with music. The circular rings represent the cross section showing the growth of a tree over time. This is used as a metaphor for the development of human consciousness. The outer rings represent every day types of experiences...eg. the evoking of feeling, ideas, insights, etc. that are of no less importance than the transpersonal realms that are represented by the inner rings. When we access the transpersonal, or spiritual realms, all the other states of human experience are changed in some way. Bonny says that great music connects us to all of these states of human experience.

Now I'd like to step back a little to briefly describe this Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music before sharing some case examples. GIM was developed by music therapist, Helen Bonny in the 1960's. It was based on her early experience of performing on her violin and finding herself in a different state of awareness, or consciousness, where every sound was exquisitely beautiful. Bonny stated that it seemed that the music was playing her. This experience has affected the rest of her life and it certainly influenced her later clinical experiments with music at the Maryland Psychiatric Institute. The method which has evolved from those days uses specifically programmed western classical music. The client listens to the music, having first experienced a short relaxation, and reports their images to the therapist as the music plays. The session often

ends with some drawing and discussion. The purpose of this method is for the exploration of both conscious awareness and the unconscious, leading to integration and a transformation of consciousness. It has been adapted from the on to one form for use with groups, with a wide variety of needs and ages. eg. seniors, children, adolescents, etc.

Now let us listen to some of the first piece of music by Hector Berlioz, L'Enface du Christ, Shepherds' Farewell. Listen to the voices, the flow and movement of the melody, the general mood of this piece. How do you connect to this music yourself, any memories, feelings, or other types of images?

This piece was part of a longer program of music used with a client in the fourteenth session in a series of GIM sessions. I had been working with this client over a few years and previous to GIM we had done a lot of improvisational music therapy and Gestalt verbal therapy. As a child this person had undergone an enormous amount of physical pain, and several surgeries to her legs and back, starting at a very early age, each time causing extended separation from her supportive family. In one hospitalization at age eight she nearly died. She was thus suffering from related symptoms resulting from these events which were extremely traumatic for her.

Many sessions prior to this one had been challenging and emotionally difficult. Life and death issues were in the forefront along with feelings of rage, loneliness and deep grief. Her body was always the enemy. Interwoven along the way she also experienced many beautiful images, of nature, with wise companions, and seeing herself as strong and at peace. She came to this fourteen session feeling tired and vulnerable. This is what she reported part way into the session. Listen for the connections between the music and her images.

“ I'm on a hillside with my gypsy violinist....he understands me.....others are around me and I'm in the centre of the circle.....Past images are flowing by.....colours, my wise woman, the castle, the lion comes, too.....Angels are starting to descend and join the circle...It's my own healing ceremony.....I'm a little baby and Jesus picks me up.....so kind, radiating wisdom.....and knowing what I am feeling and He still wants to hold me. ....And now I'm me as an adult, hurt and broken and He still is loving and holding me. Like a magnet He draws the pain out of me.... All my figures have a chance in his arms!.....Now all my image characters have ascended in a circle one at a time, I'm saying good-bye to each individually.” .....And then imaging to Canteloube's Songs of the Auverne, “I'm left with an opalescence in my throat and radiating into my chest and now in every fibre in my lungs. It has become my breath.”

I have to tell that it seemed like that opalescence was everywhere in the room by the end of that session! Neither of us could talk for some time after the music had ended. We can all hear the depths of integration and healing that was happening in her imagery, based on her Christian religious background. And then every fibre of her lungs became this magnificent opalescence which was her very breath!

Very powerful, transforming connections!

Now let us listen to a little of the music from our second example, the Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor by J.S. Bach. Once again as we listen, take a moment to notice the connections within this piece, the timbres, the registers, the harmony, etc. Then notice any other connections that you may have to the piece, perhaps memories, perhaps emotions, perhaps physical awareness.

This piece is the first on a program of music used with a woman in her mid forties. She had experienced several previous GIM sessions and this day she wanted to work on some old inadequacy issues that she thought might be connected to her relationship with her mother.

As the music began, this is what she reported. Listen for the connections between the music and her imagery.

“...stairs going down, old polished banisters, ..tingling in my spine...the bass strings are in me, rich and wonderful. There’s a call to go into the depths....going down and down, circling. ...faster and faster.....I see a face....my mother’s there. I’m needed. Oh God, it’s a pit. My mother’s in bed, sick ..she’s screaming at me to take her out....she’s desperate...she’s clutching at me.....I feel helpless. I’d like to help...I can’t do it for you.....I hate to see her in such pain. ....I’m going to stay here with her. I’m stroking her hair and face. ....(later) She’s feeling glad to have me there. I’m young , may-be age 8, .....We’ve got to talk and you need to listen to me....”.( the struggle continued for quite awhile where she tried to talk to her mother, tried to get her up and out of the bed, all to no avail. Finally with the Brahms Violin Concerto, second movement, supporting her, )...”I’m lying down beside her, looking at the ceiling and telling her, “ I know you don’t want to listen, however, I have to give up trying to be enough for you. I’ve tried but I can’t take away your pain”. .....Oh God, my body is feeling very huge! ...(later) It’s time for me to leave. “

Towards the end of this session with the Bach Concerto for Two Violins, Largo movement, the mother finally gets up out of bed, and dances around the room for awhile before saying that she’s going up the stairs and will see her daughter later! The daughter makes the mother’s bed ! And then she walks away down a long hallway with sunlight beckoning at the end of it.

As you can imagine, this was an extremely important session for this woman. Many tears were shed. She was working on some deep themes of her life and was guided and supported throughout by the connections to the music and the therapist. And there are more connections to this case example. Six years after this session, the woman’s mother fell ill and came to live in the daughter’s home, down the stairs on the ground level, where she later died very peacefully. Throughout those final months, both the daughter and the mother felt blessed by the love and acceptance they had come to share for each other. This daughter was me.

Before we do a short closing activity, I want to mention briefly about the connections we have to our communities, to this community of music therapists right here . How can we

be strengthening our connections to support our individual and collective growth, our healing where needed, and yes, even transformation? Lately a few of us music therapy faculty members at Capilano College have been asked to offer relaxation sessions to music, and “Drum Your Stress Away” sessions for the general College community. As Nicola Oddy wrote in our CAMT Fall 2001 Journal, we have much to offer the larger communities of which we are a part. There is a huge need for the ways we can connect with music especially in times of conflict.

In ending, I’d like to invite you to close your eyes and stand as you are able and connect hands with the people on each side of you. Feel our connections. With your eyes still closed, join me in this simple song and let’s listen to our collective sound. Feel free to harmonize if you wish. Now let’s open our eyes and look at each other as we sing together.

Thank you for being here and for your participation.

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