

Editorial: The changing face of music therapy

Music therapy is changing and the pages of this volume attest to an expansion of the discipline from one that is focused entirely on the individual, to one that also attends to the people and systems that both contain and constrain the people we work with. The containing is illustrated by an interest in carers and in us as professionals that can be seen in these pages. The constraining is seen by the commitment to providing something of relevance to those who live in poverty and those who are unable to communicate their own musical preferences. Society works in these ways, both helping and hindering its most vulnerable. The reality is that clients walk out of the door of music therapy, where things are creative and engaging, and the therapist is caring and committed, and re-enter a more complex world. In the real world, the people who care for them may be exhausted and needing support themselves, or the powerful leaders of the country they live in might endorse laws that severely punish them for being pregnant out of wedlock. The music therapists in this volume recognise these external influences, whilst also acknowledging that we too exist in the real world and require supervision time to reflect on these issues for ourselves. As we strive to offer something special through the combination of music and therapeutic relationships, it is important to find a space where our own professional needs are met and we have opportunity to reflect on whether there is something more or something different that we can do.

The pages of a journal often tell the stories of our successes in exploring the different things we can do and this volume undoubtedly illustrates some of the depth and breadth of what can be done. The journey begins with an interdisciplinary exploration of music therapy as a supportive act for the carers of older people with dementia, conducted by two of our most experienced RMTs in Felicity Baker and Denise Grocke, along with colleague Nancy Pachana. This beautiful extension of traditional music therapy practice addresses a real need in the Australian community, and the article bears witness to how much appreciated this approach is. We then leap borders to hear the story of another Australian as she grapples with the complexity of making a contribution as a music therapist within a Women's Group in Bangladesh. Once again, it is apparent that music has something very special to offer in this context, and the sensitivity to cultural differences and sustainable processes that is apparent in Lucy Bolger's article is heart-warming. From here we move into an examination of professional processes in music therapy, this time with a focus on how we can take care of ourselves through accessing professional supervision. There is an increasing interest in self-care within the discipline that is becoming increasingly apparent in the small-scale studies of minor thesis students. This has also been a long-time

passion of the first author, Jeanette Kennelly, and along with colleagues Felicity Baker, Kylie Morgan and Barbara Daveson, Kennelly addresses some important issues for the future. The volume concludes with an article by an international music therapy author, whose research has been guided by a recently departed colleague who is close to the hearts of many Australians, Professor Tony Wigram. In this article, Jeff Hooper deliberates the challenge of selecting music for those who are unable to do so themselves, which is a task taken more seriously by music therapists than any other, particularly within the Australian context where client-choice is considered to be central.

As someone who has the opportunity to read and listen to international perspectives on a regular basis, I can report that the ideas presented in this volume are of an international standard. This opinion is clearly supported by the commentaries provided by international colleagues that appear following each article. Australian music therapists are not scared to depart from tradition and are happy to venture into new territory to discover better ways of practice. Perhaps this is partly due to our heritage as explorers who adventured over seas and across deserts to lay claim on this continent. There is certainly more resistance to change in other parts of the world, where discourses such as Community Music Therapy and Resource-Oriented Music Therapy have been required in order to make a good-enough argument against tradition. Or maybe it is our creative nature, as musicians, to always be interested in something new and different and open to the possibility of a wrong note being the beginning of a new possibility. Whatever explanation, music therapy is changing and Australian music therapists are expanding their ideas quickly and easily to integrate new possibilities of working with families, working in new contexts, and discovering how we might contribute to bigger changes that improve the lives of more people. The Australian music therapy culture is diverse and respectful of differences between people and the ways they choose to music – both our clients and ourselves. We continue to share new ideas and to explore them rigorously both in print (such as within the pages of this journal) and through talking at conferences and meetings. As editor of the *Australian Journal of Music Therapy* I welcome new ideas and contributions from our diverse ranks, both from those with more and with less experience. To this end, new guidelines have been provided to make contributions more feasible from beyond a research lens. It has always been the spirit of adventure that has led Australian music therapy forward, and I sincerely hope that it continues in that way.

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