
In reading *Music-in-action*, it is clear to see why Tia De Nora’s writing is so often cited by Community Music Therapy (CoMT) theorists. Just as CoMT discourse studies music making in context, *Music-in-action* explores this same idea from a music sociology framework. *Music-in-action* documents the progression of De Nora’s scholarly work over 25 years towards her current theoretical framework of music sociology.

Tia De Nora’s work in music sociology and her exploration of the role of music in everyday life (De Nora, 2000) have been prominent in the CoMT discourse. Her explanations of musical affordance and appropriation and music as a health resource have been particularly influential (Ruud, 2010; Stige & Aaro, 2012). The series of essays in this book outline the evolution of several concepts that have been important to the development of CoMT theory.

In this book, the concept of music as a tool for action is comprehensively examined. Beyond a basic exploration of the interplay between sound and society, De Nora undertakes an in-depth analysis of music’s role as an active agent in the composition of social reality. Significant in her analysis is her presentation of the reciprocal relationship between music and context. Using historical and current examples, De Nora demonstrates that whilst musicking is influenced by the context in which it is undertaken, so too will social context be influenced by the act of musicking.

Progressive chapters in this book offer various foci for examining this reciprocal relationship between music and context. De Nora studies this concept through the lens of gender and nature, through performance and the physical act of participating in music, and through the interpretation of musicking in relation to period-specific social milieu compared with the consideration of broader historical context. The development of this concept over successive chapters, taking a variety of perspectives, results in a strong argument for the use of music as an agent for social change and as a technology for health.

*Music-in-action* offers several valuable insights that are relevant to music therapy theory and practice. The sociological perspective on health proposed in the final third of the book, and explored progressively over chapters 9, 10 and 11, is a conceptualisation of health that I feel is very relevant to music therapy. De Nora presents health and illness as socially constructed phenomena and proposes that music speaks to the ‘wellness’ in people. In this way, she reconceptualises health as something that is ‘performed’ and proposes music as a way to perform health, a concept further explored in current CoMT discourse (Ansdell, 2010).
De Nora’s description of musical affordance and appropriation in chapter 10 is well-articulated and clear, and is a must-read for any music therapist grappling to understand these complex concepts. Additionally, in chapter 11 she proposes a compelling and well-articulated argument questioning the relevance of evidence-based practice as a means of evaluating effectiveness in music therapy. This chapter provides a controversial but valuable perspective on evidence that all music therapy researchers should read.

For the music therapy audience, the final third of this book has most direct relevance to our field. This is not surprising given the author’s acknowledged collaboration with music therapists in recent years. Chapters 9 through to 12 document De Nora’s work at a time when she was collaborating directly with music therapists. De Nora’s stance as a well-informed collaborator provides a unique and valuable external perspective on CoMT theory and practice.

This collaboration coincided with the evolution of Community Music Therapy as a new discourse in music therapy, and the perspective of music sociology and CoMT was clearly a compatible and well-timed match. The influence of this collaboration is reciprocally reflected in recent music therapy theory and literature. Subsequently many of the key concepts found in Music-in-action have already been interpreted and articulated for a music therapy audience in CoMT literature (Rolvsjord, 2010; Ruud, 2010; Stige & Aaro, 2012; Stige, Ansdell, Elefant & Pavlicevic, 2010), and many readers may find these CoMT interpretations of De Nora’s ideas both more accessible and more directly relevant to their work.

Where the late chapters of Music-in-action are a goldmine of useful insights that are directly applicable to the field of music therapy, the earlier two-thirds of this book are less accessible to readers coming from a clinical music therapy perspective. There are many translatable concepts in these early chapters, which represent De Nora’s earlier work, however they are primarily presented using the historical framework of western classical music, which is somewhat alienating to readers without a musicology or music sociology background. Given that Music-in-action is a collection of previously published essays and articles, the chapters that are of particular relevance to music therapy are already accessible as journal articles, which may be a more targeted way for readers to access chapters of interest.

Reading this book, it was clear to see the influence of De Nora’s work on new and innovative music therapy theory. This book is clearly the product of years of academic inquiry and it was fascinating to read progressively through this process. It is a scholarly publication that I would recommend to music therapy academics and theorists interested in deeply understanding the concept music as an actor in a transdisciplinary way. Although the academic language and musicological/music sociological focus of this book may be a deterrent for some readers, it is the opinion of this reviewer that the book makes an important contribution to music therapy by
identifying and locating music therapy as a significant voice within a larger conversation about music as an agent for change and a tool for health.

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