

Baker, F & Uhlig, S. (2011). *Voicework in Music Therapy: Research and Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley. 367 pages. ISBN: 9781849051651.

Having worked for a number of years as an opera singer, singing teacher and RMT, the most common question I have been asked about the voice is “how can I make my voice sound on the outside how it feels on the inside?”. In my experience, people want to be heard and express themselves in a way that they feel genuinely represents their inner selves. As music therapists, we need to be able to both represent our intention through our voices and facilitate the same in our clients, albeit for neurological, psychosocial, spiritual, emotional or physiological outcomes.

This new text provides many examples of voice work in music therapy, with both the therapist’s and client’s voice being the primary tools of change. It provides a comprehensive and interesting collection of methods from around the world, encompassing diverse cultural approaches, both in the techniques used and therapeutic goals throughout the entire lifespan. Every author offers both the theoretical underpinnings of their approach and the current research to substantiate it, thus providing a rich resource of both evidence based methodology and innovative clinical practice. Specific outlines of the structure are given with enough musical direction to be able to reproduce the methods described.

The book is divided into four sections with an introduction by voice work pioneer Diane Austin, whose work is quoted by many of the authors in the book. Part One provides a brief historical overview of voice work including past and current research. The historic use of voice is described in psychodynamic, medical and more general humanistic settings providing a good overview for the theoretical underpinnings described in the rest of the book.

Part two of the book consists of structured approaches to voice work, including four chapters (Tamplin, Baker, Baker and Tamplin, Debrujn et.al) outlining the use of voice for neuro rehabilitation with detailed methodologies and comprehensive but easy to understand neurological justification for the approaches described. Other populations covered include autism (Thane) and dementia (Ridder), focussing on relaxation and engagement. Three chapters illustrate the potential for psychological healing using rap (Uhlig), sori singing (Ju Chong) and group singing (Oddy).

Part three consists of six diverse chapters which describe a less structured approach. From newborn infants (Shoemark) to patients with chronic illness (Loewy, Kondo, Pederson) and dying patients (Dileo, Summers), the methodologies are discussed within the wider framework of psychodynamic process and the role of the therapist within that. The flexible structure provides an opportunity for a meaningful and spontaneous interaction with the client, thus allowing the therapist to become an integral part of the process of the client finding their voice. Given the deeper psychological intention in this work, all authors discuss the need for a strong sense of self, and the ability to be able to reflect this in the therapist’s own voice. Part four is an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and approaches written by the editors.

Whilst it is difficult to critique a text of this quality, a useful addition may have been a chapter discussing the importance of congruence between the spoken and singing voice. Discussion around the need for consistency across the spoken /sung voice, the ability to reflect intention and emotion reliably in the voice and the ability to maintain a consistent vocal presence during an acute situation may have provided some fundamental concepts upon which some of the more in depth work relies. This may have added a useful component for new graduates who are simultaneously trying to uncover their real voice and develop their professional personas.

In summary, the layout of this book makes it easy to read, with carefully detailed methods for specific populations easy to locate, making it an ideal reference text/manual. I would strongly recommend this as a prescribed text for vocal methods classes in music therapy courses. It is an exciting addition to the music therapy literature, not only providing an historic and research context for voice work, but also illustrating the necessity to understand the power and potential of the voice to make physiological and psychological change.

Trish Dearn BMus MMus (MusThrpy), RMT