Book Review


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*Peters’ music therapy: An introduction* is the third edition in a series of texts dedicated to providing a general introduction to music therapy, specifically outlining the scope of practice in the United States. This is the first edition written by Lathom-Radocy and the title acknowledges Jacqueline Schmid Peters who authored the first two editions (1987, 2000). Lathom-Radocy identifies her aims in writing this edition as updating the literature to include research and understandings developed since the second edition, as well as updating terminology to reflect the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition* (2013). The book is directed toward people with limited existing knowledge of the field, including students in introductory music therapy courses, professionals in related disciplines, people contemplating becoming music therapists, and the general public. As music therapy is taught at a Masters level in Australia, it could be used in the first six to twelve months of the course but may also be useful for students or current registered music therapists who are seeking a starting point to review or explore clinical practice in areas they have not worked before.

*Peters’ music therapy* is divided into three key sections – part I and II are brief, while part III makes up the majority of the text. Part I offers a definition of music therapy and an overview of the education and training of music therapists in the United States. Part II moves from a historical overview of the use of music to promote health in different cultures, into the development of music therapy as an organised profession, again predominantly situated in the United States. Part III solidifies focus on the clinical practice of music therapy with an ‘applied’ rather than theoretical understanding of the field. It begins by providing fundamental background knowledge regarding principles and processes that guide music therapy practice, but is predominantly dedicated to describing music therapy with specific client populations. The first two chapters of part III outline a range of theoretical understandings as to why music is useful as a treatment modality and how music is used in therapy before taking the readers step-by-step through a treatment plan. These chapters may be useful for revision, or serve as a reference point for music therapy students when developing clinical positions and conducting educational in-services. This information is then specifically applied in the following
fourteen chapters to different client groups, covering definitions, terminology and causes, as well as settings and the use of music in therapy. The book finishes by providing an overview of selected approaches, and highlighting the importance of research for music therapy clinicians.

The structure and clarity of previous editions is maintained in this latest edition of *Peters’ music therapy*. Organisational and learning tools are used to enhance clarity and break up the information. Most useful are the ‘questions for thought and discussion’ concluding each chapter. Usually used as a teaching tool, these deepen engagement with the text and the field more broadly, and help the reader to reflect on the information and processes explored. The use of headings and sub-headings enhance the practicality and accessibility of the book, lending itself to individualised readings. However, there are no visual components to this long 665-page book. Visual components may have been useful as an additional learning tool to engage readers and divide and demonstrate particular components of the text.

Another strength of this book is its exploration of the use of music for health and healing from a multitude of angles and perspectives. *Peters’ music therapy* is underpinned by the philosophy that introductions to music therapy should accentuate the use of music as core to the treatment process in order to differentiate music therapy as a therapeutic field and profession. Lathom-Radocy offers various sociocultural and academic perspectives on the use of music, including understandings from indigenous and ancient cultures, scientific and educative fields, and of course, from music therapy research. However, inevitably, there are core aspects of this text that are specific to American music therapy or influenced by the United States’ traditional, medical and behavioural theoretical lineage. For example, the definition of music therapy central to this text focuses on music-based experiences as “planned, goal-directed [and] specifically prescribed [to] influence positive changes in an individual’s condition, skills, thoughts, feelings or behaviours” (p. 5). This varies from the Australian Music Therapy Association’s definition, which is centred around the use of music to “actively support”, rather than influence, people as “they strive to improve their health, functioning and wellbeing” (AMTA, 2012). Despite this, the research of many key Australian music therapists is referenced throughout the text.

The scope of music therapy research and practice has expanded significantly since the turn of the century. As well as this, the core understandings, notions and language associated with many contexts and fields that music therapy exists within are ever evolving. One limitation of this text is the lower than expected percentages of referenced or suggested readings published since the year 2000. The suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter are a useful resource that seek to enable readers to expand their knowledge in a specific area if they desire to do so. However, Lathom-Radocy only ‘hand-search’ two journals to update literature for this edition; the *Journal of Music Therapy* and *Music Therapy Perspectives*. The author acknowledges this limitation, justifying the length of the text as a confining factor. While it is important to acknowledge previous research (and there remain core concepts that are still relevant), this text may have benefitted from excluding some older literature so that literature reflecting more current thinking could have dominance in the reference list.
Peters’ music therapy is a well-written and useful text for people both within and outside of the music therapy field. Although it is based on more traditional models and approaches, these models are often used as a starting point or ‘introduction’ to music therapy practice. It is outside the scope of this book to explore community, resource-oriented, feminist or other contemporary approaches to music therapy, despite their growing relevance in research and practice. Despite its length, the structure and clarity of this book makes it easily accessible, with music therapy emphasised as a unique and valuable therapeutic practice.