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## **Hospitality and Musical Conviviality: Creating Collective Joy, Healing, and Social Change: A Review Essay**

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### **Introduction**

This volume, *Where Music Helps: Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection*, brings together a collection of case studies concerning community music therapy written by Brynjulf Stige, Gary Ansdell, Cochavit Elefant, and Mercedes Pavlicevic. The studies are accompanied by both a deep and thorough analysis of each case as well as a meta-analysis of the entire set. This approach makes for a compelling work that successfully “illuminates(s) Community

Music Therapy as the promotion of musical communication and community in the service of health, development, and social change” (p. 278). The four authors report on a total of eight projects in England, Israel, South Africa, and Norway. This collaborative research project, funded by The Research Council of Norway, provides a rich and diverse set of examples from which to make useful comparisons and assertions for the benefit of the discipline.

This review essay briefly summarizes the work of each of the four authors in their specific settings, and includes notable findings pertaining to each. A summary of the findings reported in the meta-analysis follows and I conclude with thoughts concerning how this work is relevant to the disciplines of Music Therapy and Music Education in general.

## **The Community Music Therapy Projects**

### **England-Gary Ansdell**

Gary Ansdell, current Director of Education at Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy UK and Research Fellow in Community Music Therapy at the University of Sheffield, conducted two studies in England. The first study he conducted was of a group of adults with chronic mental health problems who live in the social-economically disadvantaged and multi-cultural borough of East London. This group of adults chose the name *Musical Minds* to represent their weekly singing group of ten years. The second study was of a group of persons living with neurological disability including stroke, brain injury, MS and other conditions. This group consisted of members residing in over a 30 mile, relatively affluent, semi-country area bordering London. The name of this project was *Scrap Metal*.

### ***Musical Minds, East London***

The members of *Musical Minds* worked with a therapist to create a musical show in which each of the participants performed a diverse array of musical styles in both small groups and as soloists. The role of the therapist in this study changed from more of a therapist/teacher at the beginning of the project to one of an accompanist for the performance at the end. In this case, the therapist was working with individuals who according to the therapist struggled to get along well with others and therefore often did not feel that they belonged. During rehearsals with the group the therapist served both musically and therapeutically by “containing, believing, organizing, and intervening into a long and sometimes difficult and frustrating process” (p. 39).

In the case analysis, Ansdell suggests that the participants in this group were able to learn how to interact and belong both in the group and within the community. He also offers definitions and extensive descriptions of how this was evidenced. Drawing on Gerald Delanty’s (2003)

conception of a “communication community,” Wenger (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) and Barrett’s (2005) conceptions of “communities of (musical) practice,” and Stige’s (2003) “model of communal musicking” among others, Ansdell concludes his analysis with Derrida’s (cited in Caputo, 1997) alternative notion of community as hospitality which is one that is communicative and hospitable to difference.

### ***Scrap Metal, a semi-country area bordering London***

In the *Scrap Metal* project, a group of adults with neurological disabilities perform along with carers and the therapist on instruments made from scrap metal. The concept was created from the elaboration of a metaphor from a participant who described her condition as “being on the scrap-heap--she felt useless, scrap” (p. 156). The creation of the project through the performance was a “musical ritual” that allowed for the participants to contribute in a meaningful way in the community. The act of performing gave one participant a “different way of being herself in public” as it was important for her to be witnessed by others as being able to contribute despite her “disability” (p. 170).

In the analysis of this case, Ansdell supplies a strong justification for using performance in therapy. Drawing on the work of Fred Newman (1999), he demonstrates that construction of the self is performative and that people experience themselves differently among others. The participants in the group found that performing their self in a social performance gave them an opportunity for individual transformation. Taking into consideration the risks of performing in therapy, Ansdell suggests that performance has two faces: performance as pressure and performance as epiphany. It is therefore the duty of a skilled therapist to negotiate and monitor the performance variables to ensure safety and prevent counter-therapeutic aspects that might interfere with potentially transformative experience.

### **Israel-Cochavit Elefant**

Cochavit Elefant is currently Associate Professor of Music Therapy at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen, Norway. Elefant conducted two studies both in middle-sized towns in central Israel. The first study was a music therapy integration project between children with and without special needs in Raanana. The second was a Participatory Action Research project involving a community choir for adults with severe physical disabilities in Natanya.

### ***Raanana School, Raanana, Israel***

In Raanana elementary school, children with special needs attend a separate school. In this project, an intergroup relationship was formed using a musical “bridge.” Students from both

schools were combined into a group that met for a total of four years. At the start, the parents of both groups of children were apprehensive; however, these fears were eased once the children in the group were able to learn from one another and come to realize of the other children that “they are just like us” (p. 69). The group became important enough for the children that they suggested a summer camp, as they did not want the experience to end with the school year.

Drawing on Ledwith’s (2005) concepts of groups and community development, Elefant demonstrates how the integrated group of children “can be viewed as a community group where the trust and cooperation created a context for dialogues and reflections for the purpose of social change” (p. 76). Whitaker’s (1985) concept of “group as a medium for help” is also applied to describe the personal development that was facilitated in group process through dialogue, negotiation, mutuality, and empowerment. Bogdan and Taylor’s (2001) description of community engagement was also demonstrated powerfully in this quote from a child who was interviewed by a television reporter:

“Do you have any idea how much I have learned from this girl?”

“How is this possible, she doesn’t even talk,” replied the reporter.

“We can’t even begin to explain this; you won’t understand”

Elefant demonstrated that through the process of the music group, the children had “through their networking and friendships...contributed to social change and difference within their community” (p. 87).

### ***Renanim Choir, Natanya, Israel***

In Natanya, Elefant conducted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project with the *Renanim* choir, a community choir for adults with severe physical handicaps. At the beginning of the project the music therapist had combined the *Renanim* choir with the *Idud* choir, a choir for adults with intellectual disabilities. The *Renanim* choir did not have a good experience performing with the *Idud* choir because the *Idud* choir was able to perform more strongly causing the members of the *Renanim* choir to feel overshadowed and “voiceless.” By involving the *Renanim* choir in a PAR study, the participants were empowered. Through the PAR cycles of recovering from the performance, preparing and performing a concert without the *Idud* choir, and reflecting, the *Renanim* choir ultimately decided to combine their voices again with the *Idud* choir because they felt that “*Idud* can amplify our voices” (p. 197).

The role of the music therapist is considered in the analysis of this study. At the beginning of the PAR cycle, the therapist had combined the choirs in order to strengthen the weaker voices in the *Renanim* choir. At the end of the PAR cycle, the members ultimately decided on the

same action. The difference was that the members of the group had been involved in a process that empowered them to make a choice that they were in agreement that was best for the group. In this case, the role of the therapist shifted from that of “a monologic approach to a dialogic one...and it...did not only empower the choir members but also her” (p. 214). In addition, a discussion of *chronos* vs. *kairos* time is used to describe how the PAR process changed the use of rehearsal time from one more focused on the external performance deadline (*chronos*) to one more focused on interaction, reflection, music sharing and processing (*kairos*). To ease the tension between these two different conceptions of time, it was decided that, “a performance date would be agreed on, but only when the group was ready” (p. 212).

### **South Africa-Mercedes Pavlicevic**

Mercedes Pavlicevic is currently Director of Research at the Nordoff-Robbins Centre for Music Therapy in London. Pavlicevic conducted two studies in South Africa. The first was of a children’s choir at Woodlands school in Heideveld, and the second at *Youth Development Outreach* in Eersterust.

#### ***Woodlands School, Heideveld, South Africa***

The choir at the Woodlands school is comprised of children of diverse languages, ethnicities, and geographical areas. This music therapy project is focused on a concert that has become an important community event that allows “the neighborhood to come together in a new way” (p. 94). The children also benefit from opportunities to make new friends in the choir as well as having an opportunity to gain prestige with their peers and with the community through performing publically.

To analyze the data, “magic moments” or excerpts of peak moments were studied to answer the question, “What happens when a group of people make music together in music therapy?” (p. 101). One theme that emerged was the notion of “unified and unifying time and space” which was a description of events where the group is in “peak flow, the axes of time and space need melding; as do those of separateness and collectiveness, musicing and mind” (p. 102). Other themes included instances where the children did not limit themselves to the conventions of the music and instances, when the children were in a temporal stream of movement that is identified in the work of Mallock and Trevarthen (2000; 2009) in their notion of *communicative musicality*, among others.

### ***Youth Development Outreach, Eersterust, South Africa***

The youth at *Youth Development Outreach (YDO)* are involved in a program for “social rehabilitation because they’ve been in trouble with the law” (p.219). The youth engage in drumming and singing songs with a strong anti-crime message. One of the songs is performed with a visiting musician and a recording is made of the performance.

The analysis involved the data from both South African projects and “considers how Community Music Therapy appropriates the social-musical affordances of its contexts and how these contexts in turn appropriate the affordances of Community Music Therapy” (p. 224-225). Eight themes are identified:

1. Listening to local knowledge
2. Outside in: negotiating distant and close-up social spaces
3. Networking, sharing, and “attuned expertise”
4. Health talk, lay talk, research talk, and music talk
5. From mentors to musicians, from strangers to musical friendships
6. The silence, the medium, and the emergent message
7. The concert as the meeting place of secrets
8. Everyday music therapy and making a difference (p. 225)

The most powerful findings were how the performance of the music in Heideveld and the recording with the youth of YDO, both offered an opportunity for the children to “address their elders in a way that would be unthinkable in daily life” (p. 238). The lyrics and the context of the performances gave voice to the youth in the role of “prophets” who see and speak out about the injustices that are hidden and kept silent.

### **Norway-Brynjulf Stige**

Brynjulf Stige is currently Professor of Music Therapy at the University of Bergen and Head of Research at GAMUT, the Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre. Stige conducted two studies in rural Western Norway. The first was a *Cultural Festival* for adults with developmental disabilities in Sogn og Fjordane, the second was of a *Senior Choir* in the rural town of Sandane.

### ***Cultural Festival, Sogn og Fjordane, Norway***

The *Cultural Festival* is an annual opportunity for adults with developmental disabilities to participate in a musical event where there is respect and an attitude of inclusiveness. There are

four musical groups “with different foci, depending on the participants’ strengths and interest” (p. 117). *Together in Music* is a group for those with severe physical and cognitive challenges, *Singing and Playing* is a group focused on community singing, improvisation, and ensemble playing, and the other two groups are *The Rock Group*, and the *Music and Theater Group*. This case study tracks the four groups throughout the festival and details successes and challenges that they face as they prepare for a final performance.

In the analysis of this study, Stige offers three interpretations: participation as style of self-presentation, participation as co-creation of social space, and participation as ritual negotiation (p. 128). In the conclusion, Stige offers the idea that Community Music Therapy is not only oriented towards producing individual change but also *ritual change* which is concerned with “how the individual affects the ritual” (p. 147). Although it is mentioned that a symbol of the ritual can carry the effects of the ritual forward in time, Stige emphasizes that rituals need to be repeated in order to have the long-term effect of social change, which in this case is respect and inclusiveness in the larger community.

### ***Senior Choir, Sandane, Norway***

In Sandane Norway, a group of seniors who are 70 to 90+ years of age sing in a choir that is led by a music therapist. In this case, the seniors demonstrate a tendency to be social activists in their desire to break down the notion that seniors are devalued in society, they enjoy working on challenging music, they negotiate tensions within the group, and they express that life would be dry and boring if they did not have the choir in which to participate. The choir members were asked to do a sentence completion task on the following four prompts: “Music is..., For me, singing in a choir is..., When I sing, then..., and Without music...” (p. 250).

Stige’s analysis of the first three prompts produced seven themes: positive emotional experience, experience of community and collaboration, aesthetic experience, cognitive engagement and exercise, identity formation and confirmation, contact with and stimulation of the body, and sensitivity to painful emotions. When put into the context of the fourth prompt, Stige suggests that musical experience plays an important role in the creation of the participants’ well-being, in what would be a “gloomy and colorless world” (p. 261). Much of the analysis is concerned with the concept of mutual care and how that is a relevant issue in terms of justice in the larger community.

### **Meta-analysis: An Ecological Perspective on How Music Helps**

Perhaps the most compelling chapter in the work, the conclusion brings together key features of Community Music Therapy Practice in its aim to promote “musical communication and

community in the service of health, development, and social change” (p. 279). The key features are described in this paragraph:

The projects we have studied suggest that an *ecological* metaphor is at the heart of Community Music Therapy. They also suggest that Community Music Therapy practice is inherently *participatory*, *performative* (in the broad sense of the word), *resource-oriented*, and *actively reflective*. None of these features are necessarily unique to Community Music Therapy but the combination of them may suggest a necessary revision of current music therapy thinking in relation to assumptions about people, music, and health (p. 279).

Following the discussion of the key features, a discussion of community, identity, and diversity is constructed by using the metaphors of bonding and bridging. Bonding is used as a metaphor for “the process of developing interpersonal ties within a group,” and bridging is used as a metaphor for “the process of outreach, where relationships between communities are developed” (pp. 285-286). In several examples, “the concert brings together people who would otherwise have no reason to do so” (p. 286). In these examples, a bridge has been made in the community and the participants have bonded in the musical activity. In most cases, this also translated into social action and change within the community.

Another main point in the discussion is that Community Music Therapy is a social-musical process that is “never abstracted from either its immediate context or place or use, or separated out into just sound” (p. 292). This is specified more clearly by these five points:

- Musicing is always embodied and embedded, as “song-and-dance,” somewhere and with someone else.
- Musicing is never just a personal or individual activity: it is always (however modestly) something social, cultural, and political within the context of its performance.
- Musical and social resources and responsibilities are always shared, distributed, and fluid.
- Musicing and music therapy is seldom (if ever) truly “contained” or confidential: it naturally links people into networks, and helps form bridges between people, groups, and communities.
- Musicing helps with seemingly “non-musical” personal and social problems (pp. 292-293)

In the meta-analysis, the assertion is made that “music is an embodied and personal phenomenon [and] is simultaneously, and in principle, a social phenomenon” (p. 293). This



contrasts with the traditional view that “music is some kind of singular power that has quasi-magical effects on people and situations,” or the modern view that “music can be a solution ‘prescribed’ by experts in an instrumental way (where music becomes some targeted, evidence-based tool which will, if used effectively, achieve desired and predictable outcomes).” The authors suggest rather “an ecological perspective on musicing as song-and-dance in context and collaboration whose help is real and potent only insofar as it manages to get within-an-amongst the perceptions, experiences, and actions of people-in–places, and to afford them varying possibilities and pleasures aligned with their local needs” (p. 294).

With this in mind, the authors suggest three outcomes for Community Music Therapy:

1. The degree it makes sense to focus upon individual change, this would not be limited simply to reduction of symptoms or increase in wellbeing, but would involve...participation and performance, responsiveness and responsibility, relationship and belonging, and enablement and empowerment.
2. Outcomes may develop at any of the ecological levels...and to the degree each system is an open system, there will be reciprocal influences between systems.
3. Musical and therapeutic outcomes could often not be separated (p. 302).

Finally, there is a discussion about how these findings change the professional role of the music therapist. *Partnership models* are suggested where the “roles and responsibilities of the professional and lay participants are negotiated in each situation, depending upon the problems and resources at hand” (p. 304). This approach is one that promotes “enablement and empowerment” and suggests “working *with* people and situations, not *on* them” (p. 305).

### Summary

The individual cases, analyses, and the meta-analysis work to construct a solid basis for the purposes of Community Music Therapy. The work suggests that participatory processes and partnership models of practice are appropriate foci for the discipline. With many examples demonstrating how Community Music Therapy promotes social and community integration and its resulting social change, there is ample reason to rethink some current music therapy practices that are focused only on the individual outside of a social context.

This work provides a clear rationale for music therapy practice that goes beyond the individual and clinical setting to one that integrates and rehabilitates individuals into the community. While there are still questions and concerns about how to safely create opportunities that are therapeutically potent, the potential of increased social inclusion, healthier communities, and social change warrant further investigation and inquiry.

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