

Designing for music therapy

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Contents

What is music therapy?

Images, definition, origins, who it is for, where it takes place, what happens in a session

Environments

Spaces therapists work in

Equipment & Instruments

Things music therapists use

Storage & Transport

How instruments and equipments are transported

Multi-sensory

Multi-sensory experience of music

Design Opportunities

What might be designed?



What is music therapy?

Images

Here is a link to some general images of music therapy work to have a look at, this gives a good introduction to the type of work music therapists might be doing and the clients they might work with.

Music therapy: A New Perspective

courtesy of bmoore326 on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPRkgkZHjql>

For more information bmoore326 also has a four part set of clips on what music therapy is. See below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pAF3qxQUjU>

You'll also find many more images on YouTube if you search under music therapy; these are just a couple I thought were particularly useful.

A definition of music therapy:

Music therapy is the use of music and/or musical elements (sound, rhythm, melody and harmony) by a qualified music therapist, with a client or group, in a process designed to facilitate and promote communication, relationships, learning, mobilization, expression, organization, and other relevant therapeutic objectives, in order to meet physical, emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs. Music therapy aims to develop potentials and/or restore functions of the individual so that he or she can achieve better intra- and interpersonal integration and consequently a better quality of life through prevention, rehabilitation or treatment.

World Federation of Music Therapy (1997)

Origins of music therapy

- Using music as an aid to healing and for maintaining well-being has been recorded for over 2000 years
- 'Music therapy' as a profession has been established relatively recently, since the mid C20th
- The profession has been state registered since 1996
- All music therapists students now have to complete an MA in music therapy before they can start working
- Music therapists do not necessarily need to have a music degree before training but do need to have a high level of skill in playing music
- There are now around 600 registered music therapists in the UK

Chapter 1 'In the Beginning' from *Music Therapy* by Rachel Darnley-Smith and Helen Patey (2003) gives a clear summary of the development of the modern profession.

Who is music therapy for?

Music therapists work with children and adults of all ages and with different types of difficulties:

- Adolescent (outside of school/education system)
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health
- Forensic
- Prison
- Hospice
- Neurology
- HIV/AIDS
- Addiction
- Challenging Behaviour
- Autism
- Communication Disorders
- Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
- Epilepsy
- Normal Neurotic
- Stress Management
- Eating Disorders
- Sexual Abuse
- Music Therapy Students (personal therapy)
- Student Training (placement/teaching)
- Music therapy is also increasingly being sought by people who may not have specific difficulties but who would like to gain insight into themselves and their ways of relating to others.

From information about music therapy on the APMT (Association of Professional Music Therapists) website www.apmt.org

Where do music therapists work?

Music therapists work in many different places, including:

- Schools
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Day centres
- Hospices
- Private practice

What happens in a session?

Music therapy can very broadly be split into two categories:

Use of music as therapy

In music as therapy the music itself is the most important element

Use of music in therapy

When music is used in therapy the music is used to develop an interactive relationship between client and therapist. Most music therapists in the UK use music as part of the therapeutic process and the music is the means of interaction through which the therapeutic relationship develops. The client is usually actively involved in making music, although no musical training is required. Music therapists might work with groups or with individuals. Some therapist's work using receptive music therapy - in this type of work the client is not actively involved in creating music. For example:

GIM (Guided Imagery in Music)

Recorded music is played to allow the client to evoke feelings and images

Vibroacoustic therapy

Makes use of the physiological effects of music on the body

Environment: in what type of spaces does music therapy take place?

This information is from the APMT (Association of Professional Music Therapists) website, www.apmt.org. For music therapy to be most effective, certain conditions are essential. They are:

General

1. A music therapy room, which is private, where there is little chance of being overheard or disturbed.
2. Instruments that are varied in timbre and of good quality. These should preferably include a good piano.
3. Time for planning and assessment of each session. Tape and video facilities for recording the work should also be available.

Clinical Considerations

1. Clients should meet in the same room (preferably a specific music therapy room) and at the same time each week.
2. Whether a group is to be closed or open should be decided beforehand, as should the length of time for each session.
3. Consistency and commitment of members of staff who attend the sessions are vital.

Music therapy in schools

When working in a school the music therapist often works in the school music room

School music room	
Private	Usually
Instruments	Yes
Piano	Usually
Recording facilities	Possible, therapist can set up own equipment
Consistent use	Yes

Music therapy in a day centre

In a day centre the music therapist is likely to work in any available space, like this room set up for a music therapy group

General room	
Private	Usually
Instruments	Usually provided by therapist
Piano	Not usually
Recording facilities	Possible, therapist can set up own equipment
Consistent use	Yes

Music therapy in a therapy centre

In a music therapy centre the therapist would usually work in a room designed for therapy work. The Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Centre in London is an example of a place where music therapy takes place in specially designed rooms

www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk

Therapy room	
Private	Yes
Instruments	Yes
Piano	Yes
Recording facilities	Yes
Consistent use	Yes

Other environments

Due to the nature of the clients and type of work therapists sometimes work in other places. For example:

- At a client's home
- At the client's bedside in hospital

Considerations

The environment the therapist works in may have an impact on the types of instruments that can be used (see equipment & instruments)

Storage and transport of instruments for therapists not working in specific therapy rooms can also be an important issue (see storage & transport)

Equipment & Instruments

Music therapists all use musical instruments or equipment of some kind to produce musical sounds. This section includes information on:

- Musical instruments (producing sounds)
- Special adapted instruments
- Use of technology

Musical Instruments

Musical instruments produce sounds by making air molecules vibrate. They do this in various ways and the instruments can be classified by how the sounds are produced. Music therapy clients are not required to have any musical skills or training. The instruments provided need to be accessible to someone who is not trained to play them and usually, this will mean a variety of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Often instruments are divided into 3 categories; strings, percussion and wind instruments. Further information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_instrument_classification

www.lmsmusicsupplies.co.uk - see the musical instrument images and descriptions

See *The Illustrated Musical Instruments Handbook* Ed. Lucien Jenkins (2006)

The Sachs- Hornbostel system divides into five groups

- Idiophones (sound is produced as the instrument vibrates e.g. xylophone)
- Membranophones (sound is produced as a membrane vibrates e.g. drums)
- Chordophones (sound is produced as a string vibrates e.g. violin)
- Aerophones (sound is produced by a column of air vibrating e.g. flute)
- Electrophones (sound produced by electronic means)

What instruments?

This is a list of recommended instruments from the *Handbook of Music Therapy* Ed. Leslie Bunt & Sarah Hoskyns (2002)

Range of drums for stick drumming and for palm drumming (e.g. djembe or congas), bongos, tambourine, tambour, gato/tongue drums, claves, wood blocks, castanets, temple blocks, maracas, rainstick, guiro, cymbal, cabasa, chinese gong, flexatone, windchimes, range of bells, metallophone, glockenspiel, plucked instrument (harp, lyre etc.)

Extras: swanee whistle, bird call whistles, ocean drums, Nordoff-Robbins reed horns (& reeds), individual tone bars

Keyboard: digital piano, ideally with MIDI capacity

Technology:

- Compositional/sound producing programmes (e.g. MidiGrid)
- Instruments (e.g. soundbeam)
- Music writing tools for computers (e.g. Sibelius/Cubase Score)

Adapted Instruments

There are lots of specially adapted instruments available for music therapists to use. Therapists may also adapt their instruments themselves, for example taking some notes off a glockenspiel and leaving the notes in a pentatonic scale (e.g. ACDEG).

Specially adapted beaters

Drum beaters have been specially adapted to make them easier for some clients to use, various types are available

- Easy to grip handles
- Thicker handles
- Lightweight
- Special cuffs to hold the beater onto the hand/arm

For pictures, see the *therapy beaters* section on www.lmsmusicsupplies.co.uk

Reed horns

Nordoff Robbins reed horns are often used by therapists, they are a single reed horn which is supplied with a set of reeds so the pitch can easily be changed to fit in with the music that is being played. Nordoff reed horns are easy to play and make a satisfying, loud single note. Especially suitable for use in work with young children.

Special stands

There is a range of special instruments on stands available, these instruments can be played with one hand, as the instrument doesn't need to be held. Instruments available include; drums, tambourines, cabasa, triangle, bell tree. See Normans Musical Instruments www.normans.co.uk and look up *music therapy* for images.

Strings

Therapists often use stringed instruments

Guitar

Guitars might be open tuned so the client can strum the strings and make a musical sound. They come in various sizes and smaller guitars can be good for someone to hold on their lap.

Harps

Harps can be tuned for clients to play in the same way

Ukulele

Ukulele's can be useful in therapy, small enough for children to play easily and available in lots of bright colours

Sounding bowls

These instruments are specially made by Tobias Kaye and are ideal for use in therapy work

- See www.sounding-bowls.com
- The instruments look beautiful and are played in a similar way to the open strings of a guitar or harp but easier to hold as they are bowl shaped
- They are very expensive!

Electronic instruments

Some music therapists use music technology in their work. Music technology can enable clients with little active movement to create musical sounds, often this means use of MIDI generated sounds. The use of music technology is a growing area of

interest for music therapists; recently a technology interest group has been established for APMT members. Wendy McGee has recently completed a survey of music therapists experience and attitudes towards music technology*

Most used products were

- Soundbeam - www.soundbeam.co.uk
- Midicreator - www.experia-innovations.co.uk
- Software with specialist input devices

**Electronic technologies in clinical music therapy: A survey of practice and attitudes by Wendy L. McGee*

(Institute of Complex Neuro-disability, London, UK) IOS Press (2006) ISSN: 1055-4181/06

There are some excellent products available for therapy work but not all therapists use them. The reasons therapists gave for not using technology in their work included:

- Lack of skills/training/confidence
- Lack of resources
- High cost
- Not having time to set up equipment
- Don't like it...
- Conflicts with therapists theoretical approach
- Prefer the direct contact and engagement with acoustic instruments
Storage & Transport

Some music therapists have a room at their place of work where their instruments and equipment are stored. They might have no need to transport instruments. Other therapists find that transport and storage has a big impact on the types of instruments they use.

A music therapist might work in several different places and travel from place to place to do their sessions. Usually, the therapist brings the instruments and equipment for the session to each place they work

Therapists use various different boxes/cases/trolleys etc. to transport instruments. The therapist may only have a few minutes to set up ready for the session. An example of the equipment taken to a school for music therapy session (image)

Issues:

- Bigger sized instruments might not be used
- Therapist needs to ensure they have a good range of instruments that they can transport
- Electronic instruments which take time to set up might not be used, as indicated in the survey by Wendy McGee

What is available?

Musical instrument trolleys are available but not usually suitable for lifting in and out of a car. Music therapist have used suitcases on wheels to carry instruments. Plastic storage boxes are used and are easy to fit in the car but can be awkward to carry.



Multi-sensory

The experience of playing music is a multi-sensory one:

the sound of the music

pitch, timbre, rhythm...

the appearance of the instrument

attractive, brightly coloured, shiny...

the feel of holding the instrument

big, small, smooth, rough...

the feels of playing the instrument

movement, touch, vibrations...

When choosing the client might be motivated to play an instruments for any of these reasons. There are lost of multi-sensory (not necessarily musical) products available, have a look at www.experia-innovations.co.uk

Design opportunities

Just a few ideas...

Some kind of mobile storage unit that **easily fits in a car boot.**

Would need to accommodate various different selections of musical instruments.

Electronic instruments that are **easy & quick to set up, maintain and use.**

More acoustic instruments specifically designed for music therapy work.

There are some already available but there are certainly still design opportunities.

Acoustic instruments that include extra **multi-sensory elements.**

Ways of creating **a therapeutic space in different environments.**