

Reviews/Recenze

Leslie Bunt – Stige Brynjulf, *Music Therapy: An Art beyond Words*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2014, 256 pages.

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This book is a comprehensive introduction of current practice on music therapy. The first edition of this book was published in 1994 wrote by Leslie Bunt. After 20 years, professor Stige joined the writing as a coauthor to complete the second edition with professor Bunt. With a new partnership between Bunt and Stige, they explored and debated their shared values about music therapy and established some core themes in this new edition. Compared with some statements of the first edition of this book, the author still thinks “music therapy is a relatively new profession” and “music’s availability creates new possibilities for music therapy but also new responsibilities” in contemporary society. In the following writing, authors did not privilege any one specific approach to music therapy practice but were conscious of wanting to include more cultural and social aspects.

According to authors’ words, this book is for all those who are interested in this profession and discipline. The first chapter reviews the emergence and similar development of music therapy in UK and US, then discusses paths of development in contemporary music therapy. It is emphasized that each definition has own features and development according to their own musical and cultural histories and particular patterns of care. The second chapter describes two examples and lead reader to think about music therapy through seven current perspectives: medical, behavioural, psychodynamic, humanistic, transpersonal, culture-centred and music-centred. Authors do want readers to note that each perspective has own major strength and “the theoretical perspectives might differ in how the relationships between theory and practice are construed”. It also introduces some theories that inform music therapy, which were developed or edited by Ruud and Bruscia. The third chapter explores how we use music for a range of purposes. Basic sound elements such as timbre, pitch, loudness, duration, silence, rhythm, melody, harmony

and their relationships with activities are discussed. For instance, “loud playing could indicate a release of physical tension or a desire to communicate aggressive and frustrated feelings”.

From the fourth to the seventh chapter, music therapy practices are presented from a lifespan perspective in the sequential contexts of child health, adolescent health, adult health and older adult health. Authors provide brief overviews in these 4 chapters of how children, adolescents, adults and older adults respond to and make use of music. A number of different approaches to practice and research of music therapy are offered as well. Differing from the descriptive logic of other of these four chapters, the fifth chapter describes an interview with perspectives of the client and the therapist to present researching experiences and effects after an elaboration in some detail of the music therapy process of Gregorio. This let readers to gain a deeper understanding of how the processes of music therapy using qualitative approaches to research.

The eighth chapter offers an example to let readers thinking the identity of the music therapist as a professional. Two figures are presented here, one of the possible roles music therapist could play and another of how the profession might best fulfil its purpose in society. The last chapter starts with a Greek myth to illuminate tensions music therapists face in their work. “Like Orpheus, music therapists are struggling with tensions and opposites that at times seem impossible to unite. Like Orpheus, music therapists will experience that the struggle involves risks.” After the description of tensions and contradictions of this discipline, the evidence-based practice debate and challenges of representation are discussed. Authors present their point of views to the development of the discipline of music therapy as well. Finally, in the epilogue, authors speculate on “whether music therapy can be justifiably described as ‘an art beyond words’”.

This book gives an overview of the theory and practice of music therapy with various stages of a lifespan and different contexts as well. As authors said that “we view practice as central, and present a range of as many case narratives as possible”, this book describes a number of detailed examples to offer various perspectives for practitioner and researcher. This is the book not only about music therapy but also to explore deeply the relationship between music and human society. There are collections and comments of several prominent outcomes in specific areas such as McFerran’s book of the practice of music therapy with adolescent. I found other interesting theories and researches: attachment theory, the concept of “communicative musicality”, Irvin Yalom’s description of “curative factors” and so on. The significant inspirations for me this book offered are:

“Music is often part of interpersonal and socio-cultural conflicts. Music therapists must go beyond the naïve assumption that music in and of itself leads to conflict resolution.”

“The discourse should focus not only on music as a practical tool for health enhancement but also on human rights issues such as inclusion, participation and social justice.”

Additionally, this book will be interesting for people who tend to explore the relationship between music and social life.