

Music therapy and parent-infant bonding, edited by Jane Edwards, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 212 pp., £31.99 (paperback), ISBN 9780199580514

This book is a welcome addition to the literature and is of relevance to those with an interest in music therapy, early development, and attachment theory. It is also a strategic book, something I believe is important in our profession, as it reminds us not only to document our observations and thoughts about our clinical work, but also to test these against existing and new ideas, in the form of research.

Within the thirteen chapters Jane Edwards has drawn together a number of practitioners working in the field. Australian colleagues make up the majority of the book, perhaps reflecting Edwards' own roots, while also incorporating her knowledge of the profession in Ireland and the UK in the lesser numbers of authors from these parts of the world. I often feel disappointed when attending conferences or reading edited editions of new publications, that so many times there are 'the usual suspects' in terms of well-known music therapists represented. During my time as editor-in-chief of the British Journal of Music Therapy I make it a central aim to encourage new writers, and I am heartened to see this approach reflected in *Music Therapy and Parent-Infant Bonding*. It is also welcome to see that alongside these new writers, Edwards includes established international authors on the topic, such as Joanne Loewy and Helen Shoemark (their neonatal work), Amelia Oldfield (her developmental focus) and Alison Levinge (her integration of music therapy and analytic theory and practice). Overall, this balance makes the book accessible to both practising therapists and those in training.

After a brief introduction, the main thrust of the book is led by Edwards' overview of foundational aspects of theories of early development, a chapter that will enable the student reader in particular to orientate themselves with the different approaches of the authors to come. While not specifically stated, this raised the question for me about our stance as therapists in terms of child development, and our understanding of whether or not infants are object-related from the beginning, or become so with help from the adults around them, usually with the mother being the primary focus. What is not in question throughout the book is the relevance of musical phenomena in the early years and its role in the infant's forming of attachment to others, as noted for example in the work of Stern and Trevarthen (authors referenced by Edwards, Drake, Oldfield, Burrell, Cunningham, Shoemark, Loewy). The music in music therapy is of special interest to me and I think its complexity and depth can be under-represented in the literature.

The book aims to offer a variety of integrated approaches stemming from these fundamentally significant early years, with the unique potential their musical aspects offer music therapy practitioners. Stern's observation of our musical beginnings is explored in a number of ways that range from the conceptual right through to the detailed, many layered thinking of Levinge's work. There are different views of the role of parents in music therapy, from Levinge's insightful and moving work with depressed mothers and their infants, to Oldfield's thoughtful consideration of what parents' experiences of involvement in their child's therapy may be, and Burrell's openness to supporting families alongside bearing in mind the therapist's role and responsiveness in such work. This theme of the therapist supporting the family the child lives in as a system that affects the child is taken up by Kelly in a chapter that provides a structure for thinking about such work, in the context of larger systems such as school and areas of high unemployment. Ledger also provides her view of this area in work with parents and children between 3-6 years of age, including raising important questions about bringing a therapeutic approach into an environment that is not specifically designed for such. I am sure that the reader is well aware of the challenges of maintaining a therapeutic frame in a busy school or community centre, and of how easily mis-understandings can occur

regarding the necessity for a regular space and time for sessions. Ledger advises team and co-working, as do all authors working in such settings.

Another strand of the book is of work with different populations, such as in marginalised communities (Cunningham), vulnerable families (Kelly), life-threatening illness (O'Callaghan and Jordan) and adoption (Drake). There is another strand that enables the reader to look at how early trauma can affect a family system or leave ripples throughout life, as in depression (Levinge), early abandonment (Drake), developmental delay (Oldfield), early hospitalisation (Shoemark, Loewy), and abuse (Day and Bruderer). This range of populations alongside distinct ways of working is of help to anyone new to the profession as they begin to develop their own specialities and interests through their experience of working life.

Other approaches include the use of song, either via the Sing and Grow approach, or in terms of individual work with mothers whose own early experiences has affected their capacity to be a caregiver (as in the chapter from Day and Adams). There is also some reference to research, either in introducing particular ways of working, or as a central focus (the chapter about the Sing and Grow approach from Williams, Nicholson, Abad, Docherty and Berthelsen). Moving earlier into infant life, Shoemark and Loewy give the benefit of their rich experience of neonatal work in two chapter that I recommend for anyone unfamiliar with the significance of our musical beginnings. I found Shoemark's sensitivity and clarity refreshing, while Loewy's chapter in particular was both moving and full of the very real dilemmas that depth work brings, and of how important it is for the therapist concerned to maintain their own support network. The work will often take us to places that change us profoundly, something I think indicates that when the work goes well it is both those we work with and ourselves who are changed.

Book reviews not only outline the contents of a book, but also point out where there may be gaps, or suggest areas for future consideration. As an author myself, I find these comments helpful and they encourage me to continue to refine my own thinking in terms of future publications. In relation to this, I would have liked to have gone beneath the surface or into finer musical detail and thinking in a number of chapters. This is not just a personal preference, but for me, something unique about our work, and what sets us apart from other music specialists. In this area I would especially single out two chapters. Loewy's descriptions of her work with Daniel and Tasha goes beyond the overall mood of the music, right into the minutiae of attunement that takes us inside the music. Levinge's account of Daniel and his mother is a wonderful example of the integration of a clear working stance informed by psychoanalytic theory, and the musical identity and sensitivity of the therapist. Both these chapters will take the reader to the core of the work, and both chapters recognise with clarity the real potential that music has in building relationships from moment to moment.

While I have acknowledged the importance of new authors, I did find at times that the mix between different ideas and stances was not always easy to move between with the authors' varied amounts of experience. I have nothing against being challenged to work as a reader, but this was a feature that at times made the book less easy to read for me. It may be unavoidable, because I think this is also a feature of edited publications, that they always carry the dilemma of how to offer variety without too much jarring for the reader. What is good about this book is that it is always held together by its main theme, giving the reader something to return to in the midst of a wide range of experience and approach.

I have drawn attention to the work of Stern and Trevarthen as core texts throughout the book, and while there is reference to music therapists' thinking about the area of early development, I was surprised not to see more mention of the work of Monika Nocker Ribaupierre, who is so well known for her comprehensive texts on music therapy and early life. There is one

exception, a reference in Loewy's chapter. I would therefore commend to the reader Nocker Ribaupierre's work as additional reading to the book.

Overall, I think this book potentially has different uses for different readers. For the experienced clinician working in the area of early development, and specifically with mothers/care givers and/or infants, Edwards' publication offers documentation to support such work that may be of use for non-therapist colleagues and fundholders. Some chapters may be helpful for parents whose children are in therapy, while others may especially interest teachers or medical staff. The clinical material that appears within the book may serve to stimulate therapists' and students' thinking about their own work. Personally I am also pleased to see represented therapists writing about what I have often termed 'pioneer work', something that takes place in many parts of Ireland, north and south. This is particularly helpful for those at the beginning of their careers, where the very practical issues of how to work within a setting and integrate what one is bringing to a team is a central focus. The job is even more challenging when we are tasked with being the first music therapist working in the setting, being held responsible for further funding, for one's own identity and for the identity of the music therapy profession as a whole.

But perhaps above all, this is a useful book for those in training, offering a range of ways of thinking about the application of music therapy in different settings, from different stances. As such the book serves as an addition to the existing core texts on early development, with examples of taking and applying this knowledge into the different ways and settings that therapists may choose to work. I hope that the reader new to the profession or the student in training will feel excited about what may lie ahead as a result of this. The book will definitely enable further integration between developmental theory and the application of music therapy and is thus a valuable addition to the bookshelf because of this. Finally, I think the book will be of great interest to therapists practising in other arts modalities. It would be wonderful if it promoted further exchange amongst arts therapists about what is similar and different in our work.

The book left me thinking about beginnings that are common to all of us, whether clients, patients, parents, children, therapists, teachers or service managers. While we have these beginning in common, they are also unique experiences in each individual's case. In relation to this, how and in what ways does music have its role, in developmental terms and in terms of our own personalities and our identities as therapists. When we are truly engaged musically, we are in the process of creating and of beginning something new. How and in what ways we do this has a great bearing on who we are and who we were from infancy onwards. Therefore, there are no prescriptions or set ways about how to undertake work in the area of infants and care givers, but only encouragement to be aware of and make use of what we have. It is fitting to end with the words of an expert who has been referenced within this book, where Winnicott said, in words to a mother:

It might be thought that I have been trying to teach you now how to hold a baby. This seems to me to be far from the truth. I am trying to describe various aspects of the things you do naturally, and in order that you may be able to get the feeling of your natural capacity. (Winnicott 1998: 21)

I think this holds a clue about how to read this book, as encouragement to us in our roles as music therapists, who may work in different - perhaps even unique - ways from each other, but who all hold a common trust in the immense delicacy and depth of the tools we work with: the music and ourselves.

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References

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