

“And How Do You Feel About That?”

Music Therapy Techniques that Every String Educator Can Use

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CORE PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC THERAPY

- “Music Therapy is an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals.” - American Music Therapy Association
- Music Therapists are extensively trained in both Music and Human Psychology in order to properly handle any individual they treat. And, although many of us are not trained to be music therapists, there are an array of techniques that any music educator could use in order to improve:
 - Increased attention
 - Improved behavior
 - Decreased self-stimulation
 - Enhanced auditory processing
 - Improved cognitive functioning
 - Decreased agitation
 - Increased socialization
 - Improved receptive/expressive language
 - Successful and safe self-expression
 - Enhanced sensory-motor skills
- There are six major fields in the study of music therapy techniques:
 - Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM)
 - Dalcroze Eurhythmics
 - Kodaly Philosophy
 - Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT)
 - Nordoff-Robbins
 - Orff-Schulwerk

BONNY METHOD OF GUIDED IMAGERY AND MUSIC (GIM)

- Mental imagery is used to aid patients with physiological and psychological issues they may be experiencing. The patient is asked to focus on an image, using this as a starting point to think and discuss any related problems. This helps patients to heal and find solutions with increased awareness.
- How might this help patients?
 - Aids original image-based therapy
 - Helps patients envision goal for a therapy session
 - Introduces patients to new emotions that were otherwise unnamed via music
- How could I use this?
 - Students would be able to more accurately portray the vast emotions any particular piece may offer
 - Exercise: Tension and Release - Listen to a piece of music (maybe one you are rehearsing!) and ask students to tense their bodies and to release that tension whenever they see fit during the music. Ask students when and why they were tense and when they were loose afterwards
 - Students may begin to understand their emotions as they grow up, allowing them to express them appropriately in the future
 - Exercise: Interpretative Movement - Have half of a group play a section of a piece, and the other half “move” to the music. Tell them there are no wrong answers when figuring out how to portray the music (with boundaries of course)

DALCROZE EURYTHMICS

- Developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, this technique focuses on rhythm, structure and movement expression in the learning process. This type of musical therapy is thought to greatly improve physical awareness, which helps patients with motor difficulties significantly.
- How might this help patients?
 - Develops a sense of awareness of one’s self and environment, particularly for sensory disorders
 - Deepens one’s spiritual connection to music, good for emotional disorders
 - Helps gain an internal rhythm, allowing those with gait issues to walk and balance more easily

- How could I use this?
 - Allows students to gain and exercise extensive motor control needed when playing an instrument.
 - Exercise: Sliding Game - Pick a fingered pitch (such as B@) and clasp hands together. Slowly move hands apart and have students “slide” away from pitch. Bring hands back together and have students “slide” towards the pitch, either the original, or a new pitch. Vary hand speed.
 - Allows students to closer connect with the music they are playing. Music won't feel like a chore to get through

KODALY PHILOSOPHY

- Zoltán Kodály is considered to be the inspiration for the development of this philosophy of music therapy. It uses a base of rhythm, notation, sequence and movement to aid in the learning and healing of the patient.
- How might this help patients?
 - Improves perceptual function
 - Aides with concept formation
 - Improves motor skills
 - Improves learning performance
- How could I use this?
 - Improves upon a student's musical skill dealing with intonation and rhythm
 - Exercise: Pass It On - Students assemble in a circle with a small ball. Ask students to pass the ball to another student in a strange way (overhanded, under a leg, etc) allow them to find a natural rhythm before asking to switch throwing technique
 - 7 Little Notes - Play a slow improvised piece and have students perform a physical action when they hear certain notes (Ex. A- pat head, B- touch nose, C- touch toes, etc.)

NEUROLOGIC MUSIC THERAPY (NMT)

- Based on neuroscience. Specifically, the perception and production of music and its influence on the function of the brain and behaviors. It uses the difference between the brain with and without music and manipulates this to instigate changes in the brain to affect the patient, even outside the realm of music.
- How might this help patients?
 - Rapidly improve motor control difficulties
 - Find solutions to problems without the use of music

- How could I use this?
 - Students can grasp musical ideas without the use of music.
 - Students learn new ways to problem solve, inside and outside the music classroom
 - Exercise: Find Your Rhythm: Have students spread out in an area and play or play a recording of a piece with varying tempos. Give a signal to start walking and continue until all students find the natural rhythm of the piece. Stop the piece and have the students continue to walk in that rhythm. Rinse and repeat with multiple tempos

NORDOFF - ROBBINS

- The Nordoff-Robbins approach assumes everyone can find meaning and benefit from music and focuses on music creation with the help of a therapist.
- How might this help patients?
 - Support and grow communication between themselves and other people
 - Support changes in attitude and demeanor
 - Helps patients become more resourceful when dealing with an emotional or physical problem
- How could I use this?
 - Allow students to have an emotional outlet, as to not bottle emotions accrued over their time in school or at home.
 - Exercise: Finish The Song - Play a simple chord progression or base line that repeats itself (might I suggest I - vi - IV - V in major or i - VI - @II6 - V in minor) and provide a verse that a student must finish (Ex. I walked a lonely road, and on that road I saw ___) In a group setting, continue the story and allow every student to contribute
 - Allows students to find creative solutions to difficult problems, both in a musical sense and a non-musical sense as well.

ORFF - SCHULWERK

- Developed by Gertrude Orff to help children with developmental delays and disabilities, when medicine alone was not enough
- Places emphasis on Improvisation and creativity, as well as human emotions and values and interaction with other people
- How might this help patients?
 - Improve learning in children
 - Improve interactions between patients and other people

- How could I use this?
 - Allows students to creatively find a solution to a problem, thereby learning more and more about themselves as individuals
 - Exercise: Improvise! - Over a drone, give students specificities (what notes to play, how long to play, etc) and let them loose. There are no wrong ways to improvise, so let the music guide them. This is easiest on a piano, where you can improvise over a C major, or 'a' minor scale (white keys), or the cooler F# pentatonic (black keys.)
 - Exercise: Cosmic Whole Note - Set a Metronome to a very slow tempo, such as 10bpm (some online metronomes will go this low) and ask students to improvise a rhythm in between each beat, trying to land their last note on the down beat.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT USING MUSIC THERAPY TECHNIQUES

- The Iso-Principle: specifically dealing with emotion, it is important to remember that in order to connect with a patient, or student in our case, and get a positive result; we must start these techniques where the student is at, not where we want them to be. For example, if we are teaching a private lesson, and the student appears to be in a sorrowed mood and they wanted to improvise, it would be more effective to start in a minor sounding scale and gradually move to a happier, major scale, rather than jump straight into a happy sound, which might shock the student and spiral their mood into a deeper depression (Using the jazz modes here would be a good way to gradually move up.)
- We are not all professionally trained Music Therapists. While it may be easy to assume that by using these techniques, we are helping our students, we also know what they say about assuming! If you are aware that a student of yours is receiving any sort of therapy, whether that be physically related or emotionally related, it may be best to ask the student's caregiver, therapist(s), or even your school's therapist if this would indeed help or harm the student. A student's happiness and wellbeing can be like eggshells, and we really don't want to step on any.

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