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Working on and with dreams in Integrative Music therapy

Dear Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, students and friends, let me start this speech by first introducing to you the basic concept of Integrative Music Therapy. After that I will make you familiar with the way I work with dreams in music therapy. Integrative music therapy is a method of the "Integrative Therapy" that has its roots in psychoanalysis (Ferenczi, Balint, Iljine), gestalt therapy (Perls) and psychodrama (Moreno). In Germany we have an institute called the "Fritz Perls Institute for integrative therapy, gestalt therapy and creativity". We train medical doctors, psychologists, special teachers and other-people who work in the field of therapy to become psychotherapists. We have different branches like gestalt therapy, body therapy, movement therapy, music therapy (which I am the leader or director of), art therapy, child therapy and others. These branches are specializations of the same basic concept: all these kinds of Integrative Therapy are based on our anthropology of the creative person. I will shortly describe this anthropology here in order to make clear we regard psychotherapy not only as a healing technique but also as a method to develop creativity and enable personal growth.

Our therapeutical anthropology regards a person as the totality of his mental functions, his psychological functions and his physical functions in an insoluble relation to his surrounding ecological and social world. A person is not something like an island among other islands, but he is in constant interrelation. He is a creative "social atom" that develops his identity within what we call intersubjective relationships, i.e. subject-to-subject-relations, and not subject-to-object-relations. It is important to us to not regard persons and patients as objects because this leads to dependencies that are counterproductive to creative emancipation. Both the patient and his therapist will develop their personalities during the therapy. They will influence each other and build up something new. They will share a creative process.

We believe that development is characterized by a creative spiral. Our evolution as well as our embryonic development as well as our social development are characterized by creative spiral; of perception, experience, memory and expression. It is a continuous creative and rhythmical spiral of perception, memorization, integration and configuration, impression and expression, contact and withdrawal, symbiosis and individuation. This creative spiral of course takes place in different states of mind.

Mostly we, are not aware of what we perceive, memorize, integrate and express, and very seldom we reflect the states of mind we are in: the unconsciousness, the preconsciousness, the awareness, the reflexive state of consciousness etc. But nevertheless:

We should realize that all states of mind exist simultaneously within ourselves and are equally important for our creativity. We will see this later in the dreams.

Information is primarily receipted and selected via our senses. The eye sees, the ear hears, the skin feels and so forth. Our different senses gather different information and yet we have the synaesthetic impression of one perception! The brain processes and memorizes synaesthetic perceptions in different ways (that also correspond to different states of development) f.ex, the proprioceptive way, in form of atmospheres, iconic visions, scenes, actions or speech.

What are our first memories in our early childhood? Before speech development we only memorize proprioceptive information and atmospheres (including sounds). Proprioceptive sensations might show up in music therapy as autonomous body reactions. They can f.ex. be induced by gongs as I often experienced in my work. Atmospheres can f.ex. show up in the memory of the sound of somebody's quarrelsome voice reminding the patient of the

cacophonies of the family climate at home, or in the feeling of anxiety and 'irrational' fears that seem to have no concrete reason.

The first more real memories we have are steady visions. We remember f.ex. the glance of our mother or a certain perspective of our parent's house. Only later we remember whole scenes and actions and words.

The different ways of synaesthetic perceptions and memories can be attached to different ways of expression that can be specialized into the various arts and creative therapies: f.ex, vision belongs to art therapy, scene to psychodrama, sound to music therapy, speech to poetry therapy, etc. However, each art or creative therapy combines all senses. Therefore we can in a patient's improvised music perceive atmospheres as well as actions, visions and scenes and their combinations. Let us listen to some examples that I taped during therapy sittings.:

Music example "fog"

patient's remark: "it sounds like danger in the fog, I felt anxious and my heart was beating"= atmospherically, proprioceptive.

Music example: "a walk"

patient's remark: "it is like two people on a walk and they were teasing each other"= scenic-action derived.

Comments like these give us information about the level on which the patient is communicating with us (and we with him). This might be of interest when we should transfer one modus into another. F.ex. we know that atmospheres can often not clearly be expressed in speech but can easily be expressed in music. But here they might sound threatening as we heard in the first example. In this case it might be relieving to visualize this atmosphere because visualization gives you the chance to keep distance to the danger and describe and communicate with words what you see. A small child cannot yet visualize atmospheres, much less verbalize them. The child therefore can be overwhelmed by anxiety and has no chance to cope with the feeling and name it. Thus we have to relieve our patients by helping them to identify and name their perceptions, their feelings and their experiences. We can do this by transferring the information to other creative areas of processing that can more easily be reflected.

Thus in integrative music therapy we work with all of our senses and with all creative media, although the main medium is music. We include in our work the other expressive potential like painting, movement, poetry, as well as their combinations like theatre or dancing. We use them according to the actual therapeutical necessity that results from psychodynamic aspects, aspects of state of development, etc..

If the creative spiral of processing input and output has not been disturbed or been blocked in its steps of development, the person should have at his disposal all the possibilities of being in contact with feelings, perceptions, actions, reactions, memories and expressions whether they are his own or those of others. Also the person is capable of being conscious and aware of what is determining his personal needs, feelings, ideas and motivations because he recognizes social structures, ideologies and mechanisms that lead all of us to an increasing alienation of our feelings and original needs. Lacking or restrictive stimulation lead to deficit in expression. We all remember sentences like "don't touch this and don't touch that" or "keep quiet" etc. that block and deaden our courage to be expressive. They stop the creative spiral.

Instead of becoming more sensitive we find more and more the anesthesia of perception and expression which can even lead to an amnesia. If I do not feel and integrate what I perceive and experience I will lose the memory of it. Nothing then will be important to me, I feel completely indifferent, maybe a little bit depressive. We find more and more often persons that are functioning well but without much personal self-direction, persons that are manipulated, who are obstructed and disturbed in their personal relationships. We find persons who are not capable of sensing -and that is the worst part about it- who are not conscious of the damage and destruction of their personalities and their environment. In musical terms: we lost our rhythm. These people -and they are nowadays the so called normal people - are emotionally not conscious or at least not aware of the multiple contaminations of vitality and of our world.

Our aim in Integrative music therapy is to restore and stimulate the perceptive, memorative and expressive abilities that each child still has at its disposal. We want to ally these abilities with reflexivity and we want to make us and our patients aware of the reasons for the damages, in order to motivate them to engage themselves with others in the fight against destruction of vitality and creativity.

This makes clear that our aim includes more than just the therapy of the individual psyche (psychotherapy). Our concept of therapy has a political dimension because to us the person is not only an individual by itself. In consequence we do not like the concept of what is called "individual" therapy. The patient is subject (not object) to us and our music therapy thus is a one-on-one (Greek: dyade = two) therapy that includes and deals with all aspects of intersubjective relationships. As F. Perls once said: "actually there is no such thing as an individual". In music therapy we therefore regard the intersubjective relations, as well as the group dynamic development, to be the most important fact. Music has among other functions the function to make clear these relations, the feelings towards each other or the modes of experiencing.

Let me now come to some theoretical concepts about creativity and dreams. As I said before we integrate sense information in holistic ways so that we always have the impression of one perception. This is done with the help of the two different hemispheres of our brain that understand and interpret the perceptions in different ways. In the wakeful state they work hand in hand and permit us to share a consent with other people about what seems to be reality. But this is different in a dream. The modalities of the brain seem to work independently and as a result a dream seems to make logical sense and also seems to be complete non-sense. We experience f.ex. at the same time two different circumstances of time: the linear perspective and the simultaneous perspective. Time can as well extend as it can condense. The same happens with our comprehension of space - the actual house we dream of suddenly changes into the house of our childhood. Landscapes, persons and objects are experienced in slow metamorphosis. Space can have different significances.

In the wakeful state of consciousness we seem to coordinate the two hemispheres in order to have *one* significant and pregnant perception. While dreaming we are confronted with two different brain functions and different states of mind, because in dreams we have no reflexive ego that coordinates polarities. What we regard as the dream-ego is just one part of the self that is more aware of the scene and in a pre-reflexive state. It cannot really make any sense of what is happening (except in the so called lucid dreams). Thus in dreams the other states of mind, f.ex. the unconscious and the preconscious will connect the various ways of interpreting and understanding the world. It is them who give us the chance to experience new perspectives and creative ways of solving problems.

In dreams our self is projecting aspects of what we are perceiving, memorizing and expressing, into the dream contents. Persons, landscapes and things are symbols of more or less conscious and unconscious experiences. They are connected -sometimes in a very confusing way- with atmospheres, visions, scenes, actions, language. If we want to find out about the significances we will have to reintegrate the projections. Freud described different connecting mechanisms, f.ex. substitution, condensation, shifting, transference, extension to be typical for our dream work. A person and the feelings that are connected with this person can be substituted in the dream by another person or by other things; the content of a certain complex can be shifted to another complex as past times can be connected with the present time; condensations take place like the integration of differing concepts in a single sign or symbol. I once dreamed f.ex. about a friend who spit five fourths of one (!) apple pip in front of somebody's house. These 5/4 of one whole left me logically in despair, but when I started to think illogically or let us rather say when I shifted my concepts by imagining a music in a 5/4 beat, my world was in tune again.

Now if we have a close look at ourselves and our patients improvising music in the therapeutical sitting, we will find the same mechanisms. Musical themes and motives can be transferred into other contexts in which the original significance changes into a new one. In music we call this "*modulation*". And we also find mechanisms like *condensation*, *extension*, *distortion*, *shifting*, *duplications* or *inversions*. These possibilities enable us and our patients to create and express musically atmospheres, moods, feelings and interaction-patterns. They are in my opinion fundamental ways of creating transmaterial realities. Every creative person of whatever age and state of mental development uses strategies like these, even the neurotic person. Freud thought by the way that these mechanisms were neurotic defense mechanisms. I rather think that a creative person has many expressive possibilities which can but need not necessarily lead into a neurotic or psychotic way of surviving. I maintain that dreams and music have a strong affinity to each other and that working musically on and with dreams (and also visualizing music like musical daydreaming) is helpful in assimilating healing messages.

To me a dream is, as an improvisation, an original language. It is preverbal, although already structured and outlined. This language can not sufficiently be explained in a causalistic and analytically verbal way. We can translate this language with words as we can translate a musical experience, but this will always mean a reduction and a one-sided view. At the most we can understand a dream, as well as an improvisation, if we use a poetic language full of metaphors. When I work with dreams I am rather chary with interpretations and analytical explanations because _T_ want to keep the symbolic character and level as long as possible. However, I will help the patient to transfer his dream visualizations into feelings that are corporeally and musically expressed. Also I help him to express and understand the underlying atmospheres and biographic meanings. By doing so the patient will find the significance of his dream by himself.

Another aspect is that we do not differentiate between the Freudian 'manifest' and 'latent' dream content. To us a dream is like music - has its own intrinsic meaning. We look at the phenomena and they will lead us to the structures. However, the phenomena must always be looked at as figures in front of a certain back ground, f.ex. the biography, the actual life and the therapeutical relationship. This is an old Gestalt- principle.

It is not necessary to always work with the whole dream. A certain part of it that the patient is still concerned about might be sufficient to crystallize the message. Apart from the fact that a dream is a vehicle to creativity we should not forget that a dream is a vehicle to the complex of problems that the patient suffers from (or a vehicle to what the patient needs for his personal growth). This is also true for the music that the patient improvises. Expressing himself musically starts the creative spiral and gives insights into his conflicts, deficits, disturbances, etc..

The dreamer is regarded as the author and stage-manager of his dream and it is he who has to take responsibility for his own projections. The patient -as the author- has the right to change the script of the dream while we work on it. In musictherapeutical DreamWorks the patient might play all the roles of his dream drama by himself, in order to reexperience his dream in the here and now.

He can get involved in the scene as an actor. He can also, as stage manager, get into inner distance from the play in order to reflect what is going on. The verbal reflection takes place on a rather symbolic level. I will give you an example for the possibility to combine music and reflection. Here the therapist is interviewing the dream symbol the patient is identifying with:

Th.: who are you, dream house?

P.: I am a big and very old house. Many rooms are empty. Only a few ones are inhabited.

Th.: How do you sound?

P.: plays the metallophone (the music sounds lonely) and says: Well, I feel kind of empty. I wish there were more people here.

Th.: Would you like me to visit you?

P.: Yes, that would be great. You could come in with some noisy instruments that fill out my emptiness.

So far with this short example. By this musical and verbal technique the client gets in contact with his repressed or unwanted or lost feelings. By identifying with all his dream figures (projections) and giving them an ego-voice he reintegrates the projections into the ego-complex. The different aspects of himself can confer verbally or musically with each other or with the therapist or with the dreamer as author. There are many variations. By doing so the patient learns how to understand his dream in a creative way.

I would now like to describe the process of how I work with dreams. Most sittings follow what we call the "tetradic system" which means that the therapeutical procedure can be divided into four phases. As in music we call them "exposition, carrying through, reprise and coda". This system is of course just a help to analyze processes. In practice these phase overlap each other.

We start with the Exposition:

The patient will relate his dream in the present tense in order to reactivate his experience. He might also tell his feelings about his dream and express them musically. The atmosphere or the plot of the dream could be played by him in a solo, by himself and his therapist in a duet or within his group.

I remember f.ex. a young woman -let me call her Maria who had dreamed about a train that left the station without her. She was very furious about the train's autonomy. Maria now used some group members to stage the train's departure musically. She showed each player how to play the instrument. She then had them practice a little, before she put herself at some distance to the musicians in order to listen to her composition. Her music got her in contact

with her anger, but also with her inability to stop the train. This experience demanded a deeper involvement.

Involvement is induced in the phase of Carrying through, where we work with the symbols and their deeper meaning by using the Gestalt- and Psychodrama techniques of identification, dialogue, role exchange. In addition we work with different media (painting, movement, poetry, etc.) in order to understand the dream from different perspectives.

Maria in this case identified musically with the train. She played a rhythm on a drum that went faster and faster. In the role of the train she did not feel so bad, it was a nice sensual feeling. However, she did notice that her mind sometimes blocked her hands with thoughts like:

what am I playing? Am I in time? Can I still control what I am doing? She had the impression that the train was her body (her self) and her thinking mind was blocking the needs of her body. Her mind did not trust her body. She suddenly recognized the same pattern in her personal relationships. Her controlling mind made it impossible for her to feel joy and pleasure. I offered her one-on-one-therapy which she accepted. We got deeper into the work by playing the drum, experimenting and experiencing different possibilities of keeping hands and mind in creative and positive contact. Of course we were confronted with defense mechanisms that had their roots in Maria's childhood. They had to be understood. There was a conflict between her "id" and her "super-ego", that means between the creative child and the restrictive parent within herself.

When she played the drum I suggested that she give a voice to the drum. By this technique of identification Maria all of a sudden heard herself protest verbally and wildly drumming against her parent's control mechanisms that told her to behave, to be decent, to be a nice girl. "Leave me alone, I go my own way, I want to have my own pleasure" she shouted. It was clear why the train left the station by itself.. This was the one part. Now Maria had to identify with the part of the controlling mind. She chose the xylophone, played it very correctly and answered the drum: "Listen, you cannot just take off like that. You are too wild and naughty. You will end up in misery. You should do what I tell you." Maria now started to understand the dream's message: it was an expression of emancipation from the parents. The train (body-ego) protested and the dream-ego (introjections of the parent's controlling part) was furious about that. Maria's dream-ego had to learn that it should not dominate the body, but be its partner. Thus the therapeutic goal was that the two parts should make their peace with each other. It was a good help to have the drum and the xylophone make music together. Sometimes I played the drum- train and Maria tried to jump on the rhythm, sometimes she played the drum and had a new experience with the xylophone! Verbal exchange of our experiences was necessary in order to become conscious of all the ramifications and nuances in this process of reconciliation.

Gradually Maria's music changed. She could more and more allow herself to be carried by the rhythm and she did this without putting herself in a controlling position. She had/a new experience with an old problem from her socialization and she experimented with new possibilities in our actual relationship.

This work had already led into the phase of the Reprise, where processes of integration take place. The last phase would be the Coda: a phase of new orientation, of anticipating how the new expressive abilities can be transferred into "normal" life. How can Maria enjoy her sexual life with her boyfriend? When do the moments come when she feels blocked? What can she do about it? Can Maria ride the train without controlling it too much? Can she fix her limits and still be in contact? The music we improvised showed that intimacy was possible

and enjoyable and this seemed to be a good omen. Let me come to the end of the description of the dream elaboration by listening to a piece of music of this phase.
(Music): "By myself and with you"

You see, working with and on dreams makes sense because it deepens and illuminates the therapeutic process. Working with a dream seems to be at first glance an introspective work, but this sort of introspection always deals with the therapeutic relationship the patient and his therapist are in. The same is true if we work with dream in group therapy. Individual dreams in group therapies do not only deal with individual problems, but also very often reflect the actual dynamic processes in the group or, if not, can lead into group dynamic. Thus, from a therapeutic standpoint; it is reasonable to include group members into the individual work. They can take over roles of the dream figures that they have an affinity to, f.ex. the house, a tree, a certain person, etc. They can also play the underlying atmospheres and emotions, f.ex. the anxious heartbeat of the dream - ego, the darkness of the woods, etc. In this manner each group member will not only do a good work for the protagonist, but will also have the chance to get in contact with his own interpretation of the symbol. Why do I choose to play the heartbeat, the house, what are my shares in that business? Very often the protagonist in his function of being the stage manager will intuitively choose the right persons for the right dream figures. This phenomenon amazes and fascinates me, because it proves that even very restricted people have the intuition to feel and to recognize other people's psychological complexes, even of those they only know in a very superficial way.

In order not to complicate the work and not to create confluent situations one should consider the following technique:

1. At first the protagonist should demonstrate to each single person exactly how the chosen instrument should be played. He and not the others is the creator of the needed atmosphere or the character of the dream figures.
2. After the protagonist has worked on his dream, the group member should share their impressions and their own experiences. Robert, who played the train's engine in Maria's dream, will describe the needs of his own engine, the symbol of his energy. Maria might thereby have an insight into the needs and possibilities of other people that she was unaware of. She also might learn from their experiences.
3. By sharing different personal realities the original dream will become more and more a collective symbol. Each group member could now choose by himself his personal role in the play and the dream can be performed like theatrical performance. It is the same technique we use when we work with myths and fairy-tales in music therapy. The questions that will be worked on are always:

what affinity do I have to the role I chose? What is the deeper meaning of my role in this play?

The music that now will be played by all consists of many different individual realities that are connected with the symbols of the original dream. The improvisation is an expression of a very intimate encounter with these different realities, and it is a good example of human communication.

Another kind of working with dreams is musical daydreaming. This can either be induced by music that we listen to or by collective themes found by the group that correspond to the group dynamic situation.

I once worked with a team of people that worked together every day in a psychosocial institution. The group members decided to improvise a theme called "construction site". The theme referred to their actual situation in their place of employment as the house was being

renovated. But it also referred to the inner problems within the team. Each group member decided for himself to play a specific part on the construction site. One person played a workman hammering nails (he beat the drum), another one scraped off old paint from the walls (he scratched over the drumskin), a third one had a circular saw (he scratched the strings of a string instrument and made them scream) , and so on. All of them were very busy imitating the concrete sounds of the real construction site and thus they did not relate to each other. This situation was probably representative of their teamwork. After a while some of them regressed and got in contact with biographic experiences. The one with the circular saw remembered and reexperienced himself as a child who was very much threatened by a workman with a circular saw. He also got in contact with impulses to decapitate others or himself that he was not aware of. In this way an old traumatic experience had found its musical expression in relation to the actual unsatisfactory team situation. The musical improvisation functioned like a dream where the themes become symbols (construction site) with dimensions that reach into biographical and present contexts as well as into the actual daily life and the group dynamic. The person with the hammer and nails became aware of her need to push her team (and perhaps groups in general) in order to get somewhere. In German we have a saying "to make nails with heads" which means "to get somewhere" or to work constructively with each other. Her chosen instrument and the way she played it was the symbolic expression of her need to communicate and to lead.

Another example for musical daydreaming would be a free improvisation without any them, After such a free improvisation the group members can project their individual visualizations into the music. Here we will have individual daydreams that can be worked upon individually in a way that I described earlier. Alternatively the group members can visualize a common group dream that would represent the structure of the group dynamic. The theme "construction site" f.ex. then would be found after the improvisation and visualization.

There are certainly many aspects of working with and on dreams that I have not touched upon and many questions are not answered. In addition, I have not given an overview on all the therapeutic techniques, but just the most important ones. My goal was to show why music and dreams are important areas of therapeutic work; perhaps they are even the basis of many emotional and cognitive insights and creative integrations. Music and dreams as well as the therapeutic process are based on the creative spiral of development and in my opinion they are most helpful to restore our perceptive and expressive abilities. These abilities are, as I maintained earlier, absolutely necessary to become mature personalities.

Thank you for your attention!!!