

EDITORIAL

Creating, Providing, and Performing Space

Michael Viega^{1*}

¹ SUNY, New Paltz, US

*viegam@newpaltz.edu

Published: 1 November 2017

Video: [Creating Space \(to emerge\) by Michael Viega](#)

This special edition of *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* is dedicated to the glorious blurred boundaries of art, research, and performance. There is an array of traditional scholarship, aesthetic texts, digital media projects, critical self-reflection, cultural exploration, and social critique. I have experienced pain, joy, connection, disconnection, longing, sadness, anger, and beauty within all of the work presented here. As you engage these works of art, you may experience some of the same feelings, or you might walk away with completely different perceptions. It is our collective and collaborative heuristic experience with the artwork contained herein that will shine a spectrum of color onto the complex and daunting social issues addressed by these artists, scholars, researchers, and wonderful human beings.

Oftentimes, artists/researchers have to conform to meet the expectations of traditional scholarship, having to sacrifice their artwork as a central piece of their scholarship. Through the rise of digital media, artists/researchers have been able to create their own forums to showcase their works of art; *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* has always been an advocate for such a space. My ultimate hope is that the music, dance, art, and theatre contained within this special edition will be reclaimed as the primary focus. The artists/researchers in this special edition have supplemented their works of art with (con)text of various sorts. Some support their work within the framework of traditional research, and thus their text reflects this. Others support their performances through self-reflection and artist statements. Although research is present in these pieces, the written text is meant to bring the reader into the artists' world and provide you with the creative context of the performance.

It is my hope that each of you will engage the works of art contained in each article and allow them to have their own autonomy. Experience each piece, sit with it for a while, revisit it again, and then allow it to inspire you to create something new and bring it into the world. Each artist/researcher here suggests ways that you, the reader, can immerse yourself within their art. Oftentimes, they invite you to share comments on social media forums as a way to get involved directly in the discourse. Of course, you can also use *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* Facebook forum as a space of online discourse as well (<https://www.facebook.com/voicesmt/>)...or create a new space for dialogue and reflection for yourself!

About the Works of Arts

The first three pieces focus on works of art that examine the intersections between the creative art therapies and health. Victoria Scotti and Nancy Gerber ([Rendering Beyond words](#)) invite you to challenge your existing assumptions, beliefs, and cultural stereotypes about motherhood. Artwork and dramatic script give voice to mothers and

their experiences explored in this study. Next, Deborah Seabrook ([Performing Wellness](#)) shares an intimate concert performance exploring the intersections between music-centered music therapy and improvisation. Deborah dedicates herself to the performance space, and the music relationships shared on stage, as central to her investigation. Nicky Haire, Becky White, and Philippa Derrington, ([The Arts Therapist in Public](#)) share video of live, improvised encounters between music therapists, dance therapists, musicians, and dancers. Supplemented by audio reflections this piece propels us into the lived, aesthetic experience of improvisation and the relationships formed within creative moments.

In next three pieces, Debra Jelinek Gombert ([Exploring identity](#)), Karan Casey ([Singing My Way to Social Justice](#)), and Kathleen Turner ([The Lines Between Us](#)), share their first-person accounts exploring their shifting identities related to social justice. Debra uses a multi-modal approach to explore her relationship with social justice, prompting the reader to do same and promoting a deeper understanding of social justice by exploring our own intersectionality. Karan and Kathleen explore their identities as Irish women, performers, and social activists by interrogating their performances and aesthetic choices. They each provide access to their live performances, which allow readers intimate insight into their artistic processes and reveal the reflexivity and craft that goes into arts-based research activity.

The next two pieces explore cultural identities as a way to give voice to persecuted voices. Iris Sibel Muradoglu ([The Saz as a Mode of Understanding Alevism](#)) asks readers to reflect on the complexities of Alevism by listening to a performance of Güle Yel Değdi, performed on the saz. This shared group experience (some playing and others bearing witness) is meant to be a reflection on the atrocities and persecution faced by Alevis. Helen Phelan, Julianne Hennelly, Dominic Chappell, and Andrew Nathan Roberts ([The Irish World Music Café](#)) share their community-based initiative, which uses shared music experience as the primary medium of sustainable social integration for new migrant communities. Video documentation, and social/diversity/educational singing creates a model of social integration towards promoting justice, fairness, and cultural understanding.

The final performance, “[Passion, Lament, Glory](#)” by Jane Davidson, is an unflinching and powerful re-imaging of the Easter Passion and Resurrection. Like the previous works of art in this special edition, the images and performance here will stay with you after your initial viewing. Jane’s hope is for audiences to reflect on the pasticcio’s themes of injustices and “recognise the emotional aspects of the baroque works in the expressions of maternal love, cultural and religious hatred, anger, violence, despair and hope.”

Gratitude

I am thankful for arts-based research, which provides artists/researchers an integrative *space* for exploration. I am thankful for digital and open-access *spaces* like *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, which allows for rigorous scholarship while valuing transparency, community-mindedness, social justice, and cultural dialogue. I am thankful to the reviewers who created *space* in their own busy lives to review this material, using experiential methods of reflexivity in the process. Most importantly, I am thankful for the aesthetic *spaces* shared by the artist/researchers in this special edition and the beauty in their works of art. To create space, openness and vulnerability are needed; it is a gift that keeps on giving.

Special Acknowledgment

All the editors at *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* would like to acknowledge the guiding spirit of Carolyn Kenny, whose presence is infused throughout this special edition. Carolyn, a pioneer in music therapy, ecological perspectives, and artistic inquiry (among countless other contributions), was central to the vision and development of *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* from 1999-2013. Always generous

in sharing her wisdom with others, Carolyn was a reviewer for this special edition, reviewing “Rendering Beyond words in Transitioning to Motherhood Through Visual and Dramatic Arts.” I would like to share with you some of her words from that review, which reveal the impact of the article as experienced through Carolyn’s own heuristic engagement with its artworks:

I found the art, the play, and the portrait highly evocative of my own experience having two children of my own. Even though they are now 44 and 39 years old, the authors’ descriptions and performance brought my early experiences as a new mother back to me in very intense fashion. I believe that the emphasis on sensory/aesthetic elements is why my memories were so rich. I’m confident that new mothers who are able to experience this research, beyond words, will feel both.

A tribute to Carolyn’s life and legacy will be featured and explored in-depth in a later issue. However, her pioneering spirit and influence can be felt, seen, heard, and experienced throughout all aspects of this special edition.