

EDITORIAL

Walking with Carolyn

Katrina McFerran^{1*}, Brynjulf Stige^{2,3}

1 University of Melbourne, Australia

2 GAMUT, University of Bergen, Norway

3 GAMUT, NORCE Norwegian Research Centre, Norway

*k.mcferran@unimelb.edu.au

Published: 15 October 2018

Carolyn Kenny left this world on October 15th, 2017 – exactly one year before the publication of this special edition to mark her contribution to music therapy theory and practice, and to the fields in which we music therapists meet people musically. Although many of us were prepared for her departure, her living presence is still missed. In this edition, we turn to her ideas and our memories as a way of staying connected to Carolyn and her contributions to our lives. As she was the original co-creator, with Brynjulf Stige, of this open-access, online forum, it feels fitting to host these latest tributes and to note previous contributions that mark her influence.

We have given this editorial the title “Walking with Carolyn,” with the intention of highlighting two of Carolyn Kenny’s qualities. First, she was a scholar who valued and nurtured relationships. If you had a chance to walk with her, you would be lucky enough to take part in intriguing conversations about what music therapy could be and ought to be. Most of the authors of the essays in this issue were on a first name basis with her, and in the essays they often address her simply as Carolyn. This partly reflects that music therapy still is a small discipline, but there is more to it than that. Carolyn’s person-centred ethics and aesthetics coloured her work, making friendship an integral part of who she was and how she worked. Second, Carolyn Kenny was a dialogue-oriented thinker even when writing. Her texts are friendly and accessible at one level, but also subtle and challenging. You might need to do a bit of walking with her texts before you are able to relate to the richness of what she has to offer.

Carolyn was a path-finder, a game-changer and an insightful thinker who drew from diverse sources within philosophy, theory, and practice to make sense of this practice and process we call music therapy. The original articles in this special edition outline a number of these influences – whether it is [social justice](#) (Sue Baines), [theoretical synthesis](#) (Kenneth Bruscia), [interdisciplinarity](#) (Terra Merrill), [holism](#) (Even Ruud), [the links between theory and practice](#) (Susan Summers), [spirituality](#) (Sangeeta Swamy), [inspiration and friendship](#) (Barbara Wheeler), or [ecological thinking](#) (Alpha Woodward). We also have included two previously published pieces, [highlighting Carolyn’s spatial metaphors](#) (Ken Aigen) and [relevance for teaching and education](#) (Debbie Carroll).

As can be heard in the various articles, Carolyn’s work had a profound influence on those who were lucky enough to discover it. Still, her influence is patchier than what one might expect, given the depth and relevance of her work. From a contemporary perspective, perhaps female theorists of Carolyn’s generation did not benefit from the same assumptions about credibility as their male peers. This may partially explain why her work is less cited beyond her circle of influence than one might expect. It may also be because she freely used words like healing and spirit, and emphasized beauty,

love and other aesthetic dimensions that contested the allegiance with science that was being eagerly courted by her peers. She did not disrespect those ideas, and spent her early years conquering them, only to find them lacking the depth, warmth, and beauty that she associated with music therapy.

Perhaps depth, warmth, and beauty capture the essence of Carolyn rather well. We could loosely draw on her interest in phenomenology to suggest that these might be considered her essential features, at least those that are available to the conscious mind. There are other forces that defy description, even in a phenomenological sense, but which can be sensed, and towards which the authors in this edition have attempted to point – with pictures, personal reflections, and explanations of how her theories have influenced their own ideas, their teaching and their lives.

Voices is a world forum that values diverse perspectives on music, health, and social change. Carolyn's embrace of richness and diversity was an invaluable contribution to this. Her openness to art, to science, to nature, and to all persons continues to be a guiding value that underpins our approach to reviewing, editing, and publishing articles. We are proud to be publishing this special edition in her honour and to be marking one year since her passing.

The articles of this special issue shed fresh light on her contributions and will be a valuable resource for future scholars, as her work continues to resonate through time and in the practice of music therapy. Given the richness of Carolyn's work, several logics would be relevant when selecting the sequence of articles. We have chosen to present the articles according to the alphabetical order of the authors' surnames, which – arbitrarily we assume – also provides one meaningful thematic sequence when reflecting on Carolyn's work.

There are 8 original articles in this issue. Baines and Bruscia in two different ways give an introduction to and overview of Carolyn's work. Merrill, Ruud, Summers, and Swaamy discuss more specific aspects of her contribution, while the two final articles by Wheeler and Woodward also highlight dialogical and relationship-oriented dimensions. Finally, we re-present a previously published piece with reflections on Carolyn's work, namely Aigen's foreword to the 2006-publication of Kenny's collected work. The reflections and dialogues will go on, and they will be nurtured – we hope – by this special issue as well as by previously published articles and texts. Consider for instance [Carroll's 2010-article in Voices](#) about how the Field of Play model can also serve as a model for educational practice.

We hope that you will enjoy this special issue and that you will be inspired to revisit Carolyn Kenny's work, and to walk with her ideas.