

EDITORIAL

Being There for Each Other – Individuals as Wholes

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Part of what we have discussed over time at *Voices* is the importance of embracing that which is difficult to navigate, multi-faceted and takes us out of our comfort zones. We had an opportunity to do just that while preparing for and engaging in a recent roundtable. In June of 2022, several members¹ of our editorial team represented *Voices* in a roundtable at the 12th European Music Therapy Conference hosted by Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, Scotland. Responding to the conference theme, “Music therapy in progress: Please disturb,” we sought to engage attendees in dialogue around how *Voices* does and does not challenge the *status quo* in academic publishing. In particular, we discussed the degree to which we are failing or succeeding at: a) bringing forward a gamut of voices especially those from the periphery, b) encouraging engagement with multiple perspectives and formats, and c) contributing to both destabilization and reconstruction of the discipline. Some of us on the panel attended virtually while others did so in person. In collaboration with attendees, we considered how to de-center English language in *Voices*, how to acknowledge and challenge areas of dominance, how to preserve the unique voice of each contributor, and how to address areas of challenge where much uncomfortable work must still be done.

In opening up this crucial dialogue during the roundtable, we aimed to carefully examine our assumptions and practices, and welcomed feedback and challenging questions from our attendees. During this collaborative process, something transformational occurred. Whether it was texting someone to solve problems in their accessing of the virtual platform, attentively listening and leaving space for another, sharing views from non-dominant positions, holding space for someone who had internet connectivity issues, or holding silent and capturing our dialogue with notetaking; we were each individuals with unique voices, histories, and contributions; yet we constituted and worked as a whole. Our individual contributions to the roundtable (in their various manifestations) complemented each other and together lifted the multiplicity of voices. I believe the process that unfolded during the roundtable is also one that we aim for in other aspects of our journal’s practice. We aim to create a space where individuals can be acknowledged as wholes, and can feel security as they explore their capacity to contribute to constituting the whole that is *Voices*.

The articles of this issue of *Voices* reflect various aspects of acknowledging the importance of individuals *as constituting* wholes, or individuals *as* wholes. With representation from Canada, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Israel, and Aotearoa New Zealand

the authors consider themes ranging from what constitutes a person and respect for persons to how individuals form a greater whole through singing together. Potentials for health, resilience, respect and transcendence are explored.

Questioning our taken-for-granted assumptions, Paul Laurent Lauzon considers what a *person* truly is and scrutinizes issues of personhood, as a basis for exploring what the notion of “respect for persons” means from moral and professional standpoints. Lauzon’s articulation is an attempt to bring clarity and nuance to understanding the principle of “respect for persons” that appears in music therapy professional codes of ethics. Taking on the dramaturgical voice, Lauzon challenges us to acknowledge the individual and whole human being, and consider how respect for each person manifests in the context of music therapy.

Grounded in post-doctoral clinical and teaching experiences, Katarina Mårtenson Blom reflects upon a clinical case study and a PhD study to explore experiences of transcendence in Guided Imagery and Music (GIM). The resulting perspective articulates intersubjective and interactive aspects of how the process of GIM deepens among music, client and therapist. Blom considers existential and spiritual aspects of GIM, including pre-requisites for experiences of transcendence, and how the processes of surrender and transcendence are related.

Singing as a way to connect large groups of people has become more visible in the era of social media. Chava Wiess and Rotem Maor explore the profile and motivation of people who engage in Koolulam events, a mass-singing social musical experience initiated in Israel in 2017 with a main aim to create positive social change. Through survey research methods, Wiess and Maor conclude that participation in Koolulam, with its potential for facilitating positive emotions, a sense of belonging, and interpersonal interaction may contribute to resilience in the people who engage in it.

Zuzana Vlachová, in the Czech Republic, considers what improvisational music therapy offers a preschool child with autism spectrum disorder in terms of social interaction. Through a qualitative case study, Vlachová uses microanalysis to explore domains of nonverbal communication, sharing, and solace. Improvisational music therapy is understood to be particularly helpful for creating a space for dialogues and reciprocity, due to the use of an individualized and non-directive approach that enables the child to engage in and develop social interaction on their terms.

Jordyn Thompson, Alison Talmage, Brieonie Jenkins and Suzanne Purdy explore experiences of group singing among members of neurological choirs and community choirs in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through a mixed methods design, they compare the benefits of choral singing for adults with neurological conditions versus those in the general population in terms of health-related quality of life and perspectives on choir involvement. The groups had similar ratings of overall quality of life, which contrasts with current research, and responses to open-ended questions about their perceptions of choir singing suggest benefits in psychological, social, and environmental domains of health-related quality of life.

As we engage with the contributions in this July issue of *Voices*, we can challenge ourselves to re-think how we understand individuals and wholes, and to consider more deeply the wholes of which we are part.

Notes

1. Juanita Eslava Mejía, Nsamu Urgent Moonga, Maren Metell, Susan Hadley, Helen Oosthuizen, Tim Honig, Juan Pedro Zambonini, and Claire Ghetti