

RESEARCH | PEER REVIEWED

Selecting the Best Music for the Moment in a Music and Imagery Session: How do we Experience the Choosing? A Trioethnography

Petra Jerling ^{1*}, Carmen Angulo Sánchez-Prieto ², Isabel Solana Rubio ³

¹ Music & Well-Being, Cape Town, South Africa

² Private Practice, Logroño, Spain

³ Montepíncipe Hospital, Madrid, Spain

* musiekterapie@gmail.com

Received 9 January 2023; Accepted 10 March 2023; Published 1 March 2024

Editor: Helen Brenda Oosthuizen

Reviewers: Erin Montgomery, Maya Story

Abstract

Music and Imagery (MI) is a receptive music therapy method within the Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music developed by Lisa Summer. In receptive music therapy, clients listen to music for therapeutic purposes. The unique part of the MI method is that the client's own music can be used. Three qualified music therapists from two countries trained together in the MI method and were grouped together for supervision. Moving away from the traditional therapist-client dyad model, we worked as a trio, with the third person in our trio actively witnessing the session and sharing her perspectives and reflections during the post-session discussion. This article focuses on discussing our experiences in selecting music for our individual processes, since this selection is the new concept in the MI method, called the transition. To report our experiences, we chose to use trioethnography. Each author told her own story, whilst the others took part actively in a small intervision group as critics, friends, and colleagues. In this way, we acknowledged each other's processes as clients, therapists, and witnesses. Our experience of using intervision to explore the new concept of transition (choosing music) and reporting on that process using trioethnography was very positive. It became clear that intervision can be meaningful for all music therapists in clinical settings, and that trioethnography should be further explored as a research approach.

Keywords: Music and Imagery (MI); supervision; intervision; transition; trioethnography

No man ever steps in the same river twice,
for it's not the same river
and he's not the same man.

Heraclitus

Introduction

In this research study, we will explore the central aspect of an MI session, the transition, as it is unique to this method. This exploration is from the perspective of the role of client, therapist and witness. We chose trioethnography as the research method.

Music and Imagery (MI), as developed by Lisa Summer, is a receptive method of music therapy that later became part of the Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music (CMGIM). The first research in MI was relatively recent in 2017 (Summer, 2020), and therefore it is important to explore. The supportive level of MI started developing in the 1980s. The supportive level involves the client finding resources within themselves. This level is followed by the re-educative level, the goal of which is to acquire insight for both therapist and client into the client's established issue (Summer, 2015). This level was added in 1988. Although this model was presented for the first time in 1999 (Summer, 1999), the first training in the Continuum Model started only in 2005 (Summer, 2020).

The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM) was originally intended to be a deep therapeutic process involving the client in an altered state of consciousness (Bonny, 2001). The ultimate goal was to arrive at a reconstructive outcome, whilst the supportive and re-educative levels of MI have a more short-term and directive approach (Paik-Maier, 2010). The third level of MI, where the unconscious is accessed, also known as the reconstructive level, employs transformation-oriented imagery with reconstruction/transcendence as the final goal (Montgomery, 2012; Summer, 2015). Summer's (2011) first published MI case study alluded to the client's emotional connection to the music, including their feelings of empowerment, and she reported that music was the beginning of this transformation. Herold (2021) and Story and Beck (2017) all mention their clients' emotional connection to the music.

The main difference between BMGIM and MI is that in BMGIM the client listens to a pre-selected programme of music in an altered state of consciousness. During the listening process, the client is invited to spontaneously visualise to the music. This "visualisation journey" is guided by a trained guide (Bonny, 2001). After the journey, one or more significant moments are drawn as a mandala and then used for the discussion, which is linked to the client's reality and needs (Bruscia, 2015).

MI uses one piece of music that is repeated, and the client draws whilst listening to the music. Music can be suggested by the therapist or the client. For this reason, the playlists (or music pool) of both client and therapist can be used to find the best music for the moment. Summer (2015) explains that the client should be encouraged and helped to discover music that is most suitable for their chosen focus. The client's relationship with music is to be taken into account and music of any genre can be used.

The part of the session where the music is chosen is called the transition. The transition is the one section of an MI session that is not part of the original BMGIM session process. After the prelude (the pretalk), where a specific focus point for the session is agreed upon between the therapist and client, the transition is the section where the best music to enhance that focus is collaboratively explored and identified (Paik-Maier, 2010) by playing a short excerpt of all suggested pieces of music. In MI music is thus selected in the moment. Once the client decides on the "best" piece of music for the focus of the session, that piece of music is played while the client is drawing. The piece of music is repeated until the

client indicates that their image is complete (Summer, 2015).

The importance of choosing the music became clear to us through our intervision sessions. Intervision is the structured meeting between a small group of professional peers, where the purpose is to maintain and/or improve the standard of professional functioning or practising in a specific field through questioning, discussing, advising and supporting one another (De Meer & Rombout, 2003). This is in line with the supervision principle that a relationship of collaboration and equality underpins successful and productive supervision (Henderson et al., 2014). Schön (1982) emphasises the importance of being a self-reflecting practitioner. The intervision method helped us to equip ourselves better as trainees and self-reflecting practitioners. During the intervision process, we worked together as therapist, client and witness, taking turns in each role. The findings that will be presented are based on examples from our intervision sessions.

Background

MI and BMGIM are the two methods that together form the CMGIM (Summer, 2020). However, Lawes (2022) alludes to the fact that MI training can be undertaken separately from BMGIM training. The authors were three members of the first group of GIM fellows, already trained in the BMGIM method, to be trained as MI therapists by Lisa Summer in London.

The foundation of MI training lies in the continuum structure of Wolberg's (1977) psychotherapy levels: supportive, re-educative and reconstructive. Our level 1 training (Supportive Music and Imagery) took place in 2019. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the advanced level of the training had to take place online in 2020. An important requirement for obtaining the qualification is conducting a series of MI sessions on the re-educative level with clients and writing session reports. Ten hours of group supervision is another non-negotiable prerequisite for qualification (Scott-Moncrieff et al., 2020).

Our intervision group consisted of the three authors, two of whom live in Spain and one in South Africa. After the training, we needed to find novel ways to learn and gain practical experience that would be suitably deep for supervision purposes to finally qualify as MI therapists. Because of the complexities arising from being situated in different countries, our supervisor encouraged us three trainees to work together as a trio, although sessions are normally conducted in dyads (therapist and client; Scott-Moncrieff et al., 2020).

Procedure

Duoethnography refers to a research method in which two people in dialogue question and examine the meanings they ascribe to a social issue or phenomenon in order to generate new meaning and perceptions (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). Trioethnography applies the same method as duoethnography, but in this case three researchers of different backgrounds and perspectives share their stories with the purpose of creating a better understanding of the phenomenon (Lozano et al., 2021). Following the example of an article written in the trioethnography format by Rogers-Shaw, Carr-Chellman and Choi (2021), we realised this was the best method for our research. We are three researchers working and learning together with a high regard for each other as professionals as well as students. Similar to a duoethnography, where the collaboration between researchers is intended to share personal experiences, whilst also being free to critique and ask questions with openness and respect for each other (Sawyer & Norris, 2015), we realised that it could be effectively executed with the three of us. Sawyer and Norris (2015) also refer to trioethnography as an expansion of the duoethnography method to ensure greater

objectivity in the research. Only in this way can we contribute and add value to a specific cultural and social context.

No research method should be too prescriptive, according to Norris et al. (2016) and Breault (2016). However, duoethnography has developed as a research method with nine distinguishable tenets (Breault, 2016; Norris & Sawyer, 2016). These tenets include:

1. Currere (Pinar, 1994), the first tenet, refers to the telling of our story looking back (regressive), looking forward (progressive), analysing (interpreting) and synthesising (integration; Agosto et al., 2015). Currere is “an act of self-interrogation” (Norris & Sawyer, 2016, p. 13) with the aim to be transformed, and, in duoethnography, this takes place in the presence of another person.
2. The second tenet is polyvocal and dialogic (Breault, 2016; Kinnear & Ruggunan, 2019; Norris & Sawyer, 2016). It means that various voices are heard, and more than one story becomes integrated into one.
3. The third tenet entails disruption of metanarratives (Kinnear & Ruggunan, 2019; Norris & Sawyer, 2016). This is linked to the second tenet, as the truth is looked at from different points of view.
4. Difference (Norris & Sawyer, 2016) between authors needs to emerge and be made clear in this research method. This is the fourth tenet.
5. An expectation of openness is the fifth tenet: there needs to be space for dialogic exchange and regenerative transformation.
6. Trustworthiness, this sixth tenet claims that trustworthiness is found in self-reflexivity and the willingness to become vulnerable in front of the other researchers (Kinnear & Ruggunan, 2019).
7. The seventh tenet is witnessing by other readers. Writing should be accessible: “Readers (can) witness the researchers trying to make sense of and transform their recalled experiences” (Norris and Sawyer, 2016, p. 16).
8. The eighth tenet refers to ethical stances. Ethical stances shift to one of wanting to learn and change the self instead of the other, also opening up possibilities for readers to make their own meaning. To remain vulnerable and as trustworthy as possible, it is important that identities are protected. For the purpose of the case discussions in this article, we each chose a pseudonym. The reader will still know that these are the authors’ personal sessions but will not be able to know who was client or therapist or witness in each case discussion. Chang (2016) argues that, because perfect protection of privacy would not be possible the authors must “model an honest and conscious effort to adhere to the ethical code of research” (p. 63).
9. Lastly, the ninth tenet is mutual trust. Mutual trust between co-authors is a prerequisite for this research method. Authors are constructing a new narrative or contextual truth through combining our stories (tenets 2 and 3), and therefore mutual trust is non-negotiable. Since we are all practising therapists, we understand the importance of trust. We have worked together as a team throughout our training. This was an important requirement and consideration in writing this article, especially where we discussed our cases.

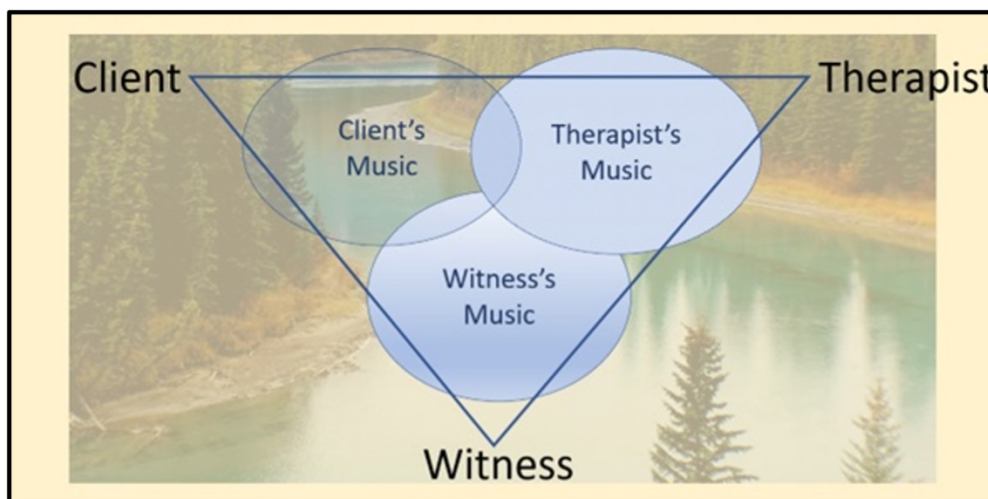
The three authors, all experienced female music therapists, were the participants in this research study. Data were collected from six of our sessions together.¹ The data analysis was done using the method of trioethnography. We compared notes and discussed our memories in the light of the nine tenets that are implicit in this research method. For the purpose of the study, we chose pseudonyms for recording the data from sessions.

Findings

Our Separate Stories

The data for our findings were gathered from the transition section in six different sessions, two of each of the three authors. In each case one of the authors was in the role of client. We decided to use the image of a river as a metaphor for the music selection.² It is an organic process in which the musical backgrounds of the three participants are in interaction. They flow like a river enabling changes in the client. In a dyadic session, this influence also appears between the client's and therapist's music.

Figure 1. Music backgrounds interacting as a flowing river.



Note: Photograph by Pixabay (2016).

Case Example 1: Mathilda as Client

In Mathilda's first session, with Megara³ as therapist and Olivia as witness, the issue to be addressed was Mathilda's struggle with boundaries. Megara gave Mathilda enough time to explore where in her body she felt this discomfort with her boundaries. Mathilda explained that she felt a hot pain in her chest.

Only two pieces of music were necessary for Mathilda to decide what she needed most. Both pieces came from Megara's pool of music. The first piece was Stokowski's symphonic arrangement of "Come sweet death," BWV478 (Bach, 1736/1997). The second piece of music Mathilda decided to use was "Sun" from the album *Planetarium* (Stevens et al., 2017b). The reference to the hot pain was the clue for Megara to suggest this piece of music. The two pieces of music were so different that the choice seemed easy. Mathilda needed the "space" which was more prominent in the second piece. She explained later how "Chronos" became "Kairos" during the process of drawing. Chronos is the Greek word for chronological time, or real time, while Kairos refers to an opportune moment for action (Pinilis, 2011).

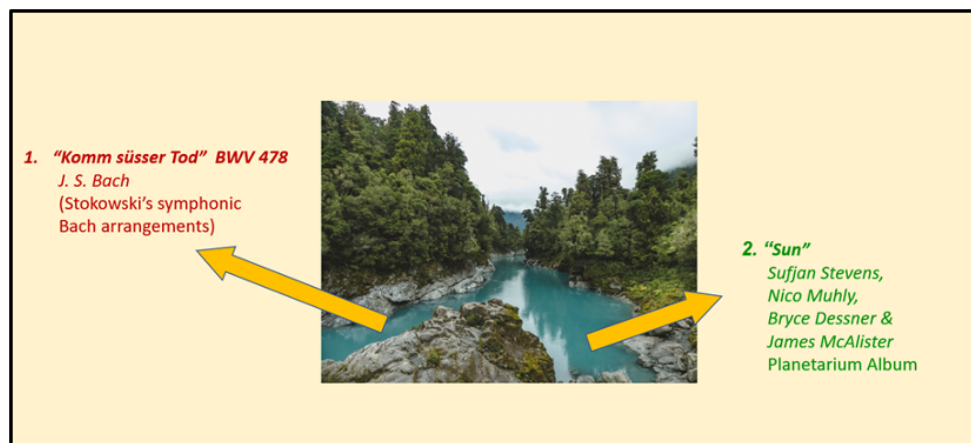
Mathilda said she allowed the flow of the music to set her free and let go of control, not realising how good that would feel. It was unexpected. She could let go of everything in her chest and labelled her drawing: "Dissolution of hot pain" (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Mathilda's image "Dissolution of hot pain."



In terms of our river metaphor, Mathilda's process of choosing music looks like Figure 3, where there is simply a fork in the river, and the choice is obvious.

Figure 3. A fork in the river with a definite decision of which way to go.



Note: Photograph by Lastovich (2017).

In Mathilda's follow-up session, Olivia was the therapist and Megara took the role of the witness. There was a clear link between the two sessions: Mathilda's finds it very difficult to say "No!"

In trying to find the right music, Olivia asked Mathilda where she felt the heaviness of saying "No!" in her body. Mathilda said that it was in her hips: "I want to run from a situation, and I can't. It feels, rigid, stuck, blocked." The next question was if there should be a dialogue between instruments.

Mathilda replied that there should be two main instruments, one sounding low, bass or bassoon, and another high, like metal:

One with a low register that would resist and could represent the strength of the "No!" And another higher or more resonant one that would mean the predominance of the "Yes." In such music, even if one voice triumphed or was more visible, it could not hide the presence of the "resistant" instrument.

The first piece of music that was played was Boccherini's (1770/2017) Cello Concerto in B-flat major: "Adagio," from Olivia's music pool. Mathilda said that the music evoked a feeling that "I should say no but I say yes, which brings a sensation of loneliness," and that

came out in this music: “The music reflected the two registers. The notes at the beginning and the end represented the doubt, the resistance, and the difficulty of the situation I felt.”

The second choice of music was from Mathilda’s own music pool: The “Presto” from Vivaldi’s (1720/2010) *Concerto for Bassoon and Continuo in G Minor*. Mathilda felt that the fast tempo was very good. It fitted well with the stress, the pressure, the moment just before saying yes, and seeing the problem but not saying anything:

The consideration of others over myself. In my mind, because I know this piece, the music represents the stress and struggle between what I want to express and what I will say in the belief that it is “the right thing to do.” Doubt and resistance are also very well represented by the *ritardando* and the suspension of tempo before returning to the furious attack. Also, the repetition of motives and the descending falls in the soloist’s part illustrate this inner struggle well.

A third music option was taken from Olivia’s pool: “Thunderstruck” by 2CELLOS (2015). “This matches the stress plus the feeling of handling the situation in the wrong way, I feel angry because I ignore my needs. It’s incredible how well each piece of music matches with some part from the issue.”

In the end, Mathilda chose the Vivaldi from her own list:

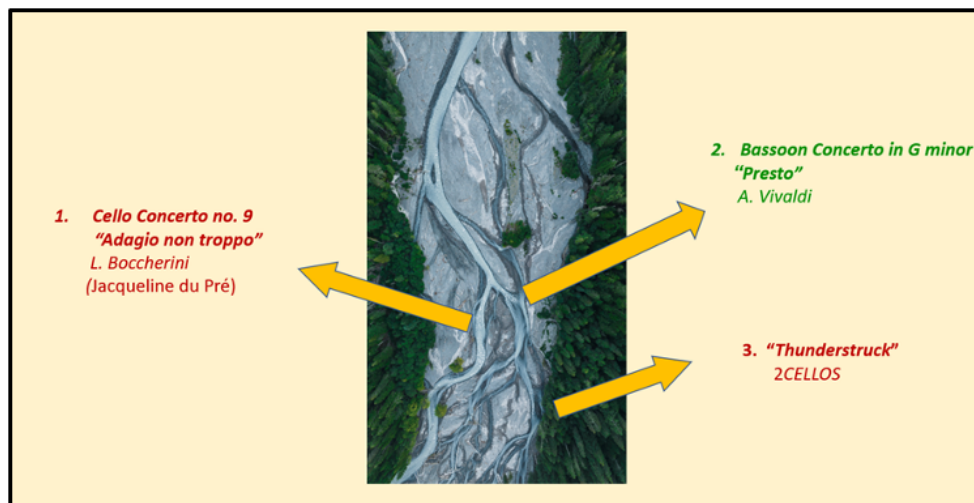
It was only a way of exemplifying what I could identify with and representing what surfaced in the session’s dialogue. I know this piece so well because I listen to it often in self-sessions. The surprise of the piece proposed by another inspires other facets that can be chosen, because they fit better to the situation perceived in the here and now of the session, or because they provoke curiosity about what might appear new or different (Figure 4). However, comparing the other two pieces of music made me hear mine differently and find it appropriate or the best match for the moment.

Figure 4. Mathilda’s image “I can see behind the mirror.”



Returning to our river metaphor, this time the process of choosing the music would look like a river having many branches, and each of them could lead to a possible solution (Figure 5). The many possibilities could also possibly point to Mathilda’s struggle with boundaries.

Figure 5. A river with different branches, each with its own possibilities.



Note: Photograph by Kelly (2022).

Case Example 2: Megara as Client

In Megara's first session Olivia was in the role of the therapist and Mathilda the witness. The focus in this session was on the voice in Megara's head being so hard on her, saying things like "I am not a good therapist, I am an imposter." This issue was quite deep-seated, as "it reminded me (of the times) when my father looked down on me, always saying I was the worst cello student, or that I didn't deserve success."

For Megara the gender of the voice in the music was important; "because for me the 'bad' voice was a male voice." Megara wanted to start with the soundtrack music from the film *Dracula – The Beginning*, by Wojciech Kilar (1992):

...Because he is a villain, a killer, and there are whispers in the music that it seems (as if) they are insulting him. I wanted to work with something extremely dark, and this music sounds to me very (much) like this heaviness, like dragging the feet on the ground. So, the focus was on my humiliation wound, because it is a self-punishing voice, and in fact there were some vulgarities mentioned, like feeling dirty and not worthy, but with a huge anger inside, that I do not let go (of), but it is reflected in the last part of the piece.

After listening to various extracts from *Dracula – The Beginning* (Kilar, 1992), Megara also noticed a female voice, and realised that "she is like a lament, we talked about, the polarity hate/love of myself, male/female, victim/perpetrator." She mentioned the music from *Phantom of the Opera* because "in there the roles are not so fixed, good versus evil. It is more optimistic, dark but also light, and the anger is not [held onto]."

Through attending to what Megara said, Olivia played short extracts from Mark Mancina's (2009) "August's Rhapsody" from the soundtrack *August Rush*, as there are similar qualities. It is less dark, but with a balance between heavy and light, and also a female voice towards the end. However, Megara felt that this music was "too kind" and "too joyful" for her intention, and Mathilda, as witness, also stated that despite the similar qualities, it was "too far from what the client wanted."

A third piece of music was suggested by Olivia: the "Finale" from Mahler's *Symphony No.6* (1904/2009). According to Megara, the sound of the French horn related well to the "evil feelings," but she said she needed "more unpleasantness" because she was "angrier than [the mood] this music [portrayed]," and "Mahler resonated very well with the darkness of *Dracula*, but I need the voices."

Mathilda felt that this music by Mahler was empowering, but the dialogue would be clearer in the second movement of Shostakovich's 10th symphony (1953/2010). This piece

was from Mathilda's music pool, and she felt that there were two elements in the music that suited the client's focus. Megara mentioned that the Shostakovich matched the anger better, but again she needed the human voice. She needed the victim and the perpetrator to speak, and the victim NOT to run away. Mathilda also realised that the percussion represented the confrontation well. Olivia noticed that it now seemed that the client was ready for dialogue and that she could now tolerate the two opposite parts (perpetrator and victim) represented in the music.

The next (fifth) piece of music played, was the Andrew Lloyd Webber track "Phantom of the Opera" (1986/1987), which was from Megara's own pool of music. She said: "It was a relief that we could listen to the 'bad' male voice but the kind female one took a leading role and felt compassion for the other." This is what she needed: "The inner judge is seducing me like the Phantom and now I want to listen to him."

A sixth option was also selected from Olivia's music pool, namely the theme from *Game of Thrones* (Djawadi, 2011/2019), but the version chosen by Olivia was the flute arrangement by Wouter Kellerman (recorded in 2019), since the flute and the bass flute are in dialogue. However, she soon realised that the timbre of the flute was not what the client wanted. Megara stated that she loved this piece, "but not for today."

Ultimately, after having listened to six excerpts of music, the client chose the fifth piece (Phantom) to work with:

The empowerment (Figure 6) was because one part could forgive the other, and my chest was filled with love for myself while I was drawing, almost like a sexual act. Both voices united, there were both male and female at the same time, both strong and vulnerable, both good, the brown colour that in the beginning I felt disgust about, started to look beautiful for me...

The most important thing for me to discover was that the relationship between my inner parts is complex: The victim can feel compassion for the perpetrator, and the part that I was not accepting brought me an incredible strength. I really felt after the session I can love that part when the integration begins, and so, the real healing of the wound.

Figure 6. Megara's image "Empowerment."



In terms of the metaphor of the river, Megara's process is linear (Figure 7). Each turn in the river represents a new choice of music, producing twists and turns in the client's mind, similar to the river's meandering. Each piece of music contributes to another possible choice with something that sound suitable for the focus. This is similar to each turn in the river that brings something else to the scenery. The client, who first suggested a piece of music from her own pool, finally chooses the fifth piece to accompany her on the journey.

Figure 7. A meandering river, taking its time through many turns.



Note: Photograph by Plenio (2018).

During Megara’s second session, when Mathilda and Olivia swapped roles, it was clear from the start that this was an extension of the previous session in terms of the focus. Megara had realised in the previous session that she needed to accept her own paradoxical inner parts, and for this reason she wanted head-on confrontational music.

The first piece of music that we listened to was from the original soundtrack of *Final Fantasy VII*. The score is by Nobuo Uematsu (1997). The track is called “Those Chosen by the Planet.” This was from Megara’s own music pool. Yet after listening to this, Megara immediately returned to the first piece of music that she suggested in her previous session: “Dracula – The Beginning,” by Wojciech Kilar (1992). There was no need in this session to explore more music examples. Megara wanted to use the *Dracula*-theme.

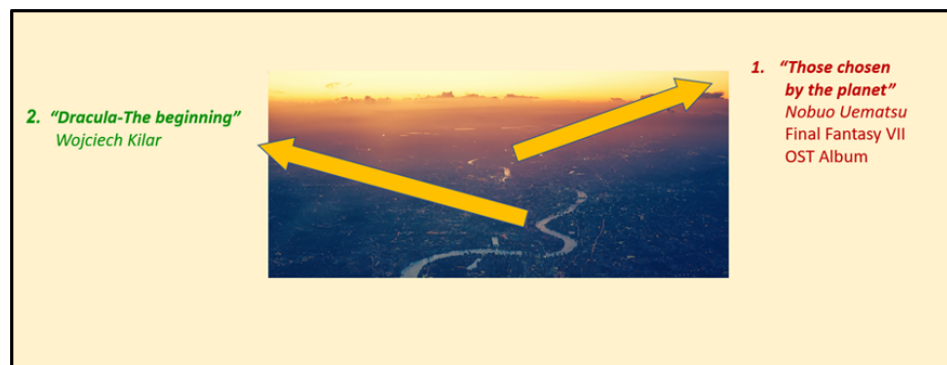
Figure 8. Megara’s image “Accepting disgust as part of life.”



In her feedback Megara said: “It was an enlightening session, thanks to the earlier work. The ‘aha’ moment was when I realised the difference between shame and disgust (Figure 8). The eye in the drawing represents the new awareness that this session provided.”

Figure 9 shows how the meandering river is present again in Megara’s session. Only this time, she knows, almost beforehand, that she wants the music that was not used in the previous session.

Figure 9. A “short walk” along the meandering river.



Note: Photograph by Plenio (2018).

Case Example 3: Olivia as Client

The focus for Olivia’s first session was easily established, as she was moving from one city to another. This was exciting and frightening at the same time. In this session Mathilda was in the role of therapist and Megara was witnessing the process. Olivia knew that the overwhelming feelings were not going to disappear, so she wanted to use the session to try and balance the competing perceptions: The fear of the unknown, but also the excitement of new opportunities.

This balance, or rather contradiction, had to be presented in the music. Four pieces of music, all from Mathilda’s music pool, were explored: The first suggestion was “Voyage of Destiny” by Paul Mottram (2017b) from the album *Myriad*, as there is a forward moving drumbeat throughout the music, which is later echoed by repetitive patterns in the violins. Although the relevant qualities were present, the piece was “too light” for Olivia’s focus.

The second suggestion was the “Oxford Suite, Part 1” from the *Purple Electric Violin Concerto* by Ed Alleyne-Johnson (1992). Olivia felt the big space between the voice parts fitted with the tension she felt. There was a “pulling aspect” in the violin which resonated with her feeling of fear.

The third piece listened to, “Fireflies,” was also from the album *Myriad* by Paul Mottram (2017a). Although the music also had qualities that matched the feeling of being overwhelmed and Olivia liked how the bass became stronger, she felt that it started “almost too happy.”

A last suggestion was added: “Black Energy” (Stevens et al., 2017a) from the album *Planetarium*. This was heavy enough, but there was not enough contrast to depict the contrast Olivia was looking for.

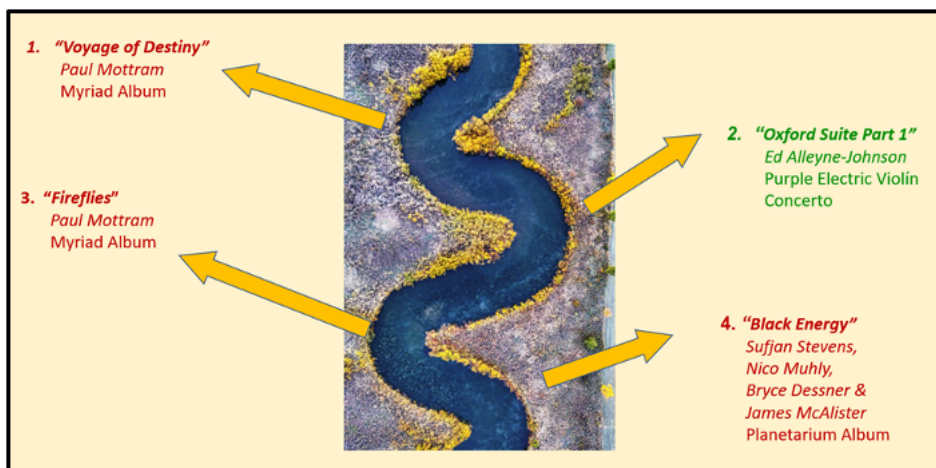
The second piece, “Oxford Suite, Part 1,” was chosen for the process, as it certainly had enough of the tension that Olivia experienced, and the choice was easy for her: “I felt this piece was the right one from the start, but after comparing it with other pieces of music that also have qualities that can work, it reinforced my original gut feeling.” In her feedback Olivia said: “I am starting to understand [the] confusion, or at least where it comes from. I felt it in my stomach, but now it is more in the head. The drawing (Figure 10) depicts how the music went [in] three directions, which made me imagine a genie lamp.” It offers three wishes, in this case three possibilities: Denial, sadness and opportunity for growth.

Figure 10. Olivia’s image “Clear confusion.”



This same movement can be seen in the river metaphor (Figure 11). The river is flowing freely, and there are definite turns, symbolising the tension.

Figure 11. A meandering river with distinct turns.



Note: Photograph by Fisk (2022).

In Olivia’s second session, Megara was the therapist and Mathilda the witness. The focus of this session was Olivia’s issue of managing frustration.

For Olivia, the music “should sound deep and dark in order to work with the frustration and anger.” The first choice was from her own pool of music: “Dirge” from the album *Pagan Saints* (Flesh and Bone, 1999). “It gives that low darkness that I am looking for” but, after listening to a short excerpt, she added: “It is good, but the energy needs to build throughout the piece.”

The second piece of music was suggested by Megara: “Magneto,” by Henry Jackman (2011) from the soundtrack album *X-Men: First Class*, but it felt too energetic for Olivia. Megara then suggested a third piece: Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein’s (2016a) “The Upside Down” (Album: *Stranger Things* Volume 1). But that started too quietly and was too contained. “What I need, is to express how I really feel and not hold onto my old patterns, which include being quiet and contained, until I explode.”

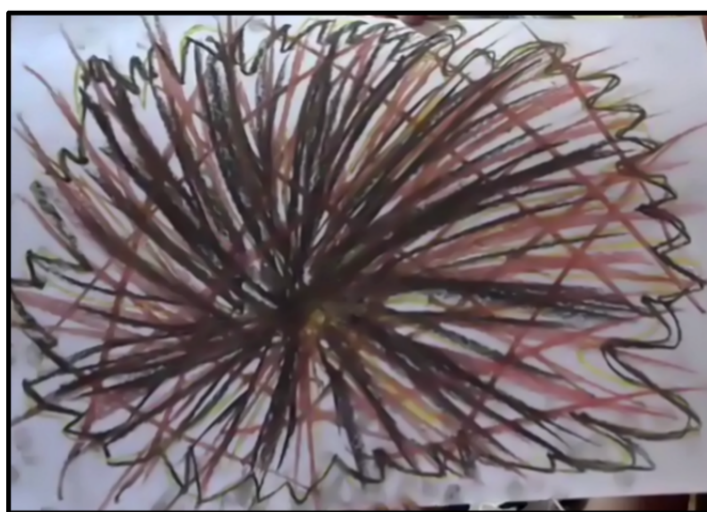
Olivia’s next suggestion was “Don Giovanni, a cenar teco m’invitasti,” the aria from Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni* (1787/2012), as this also has a deep, dark voice, but in the moment of listening she said: “I [could] not relate to the particular kind of confrontation now, so it would not work today.” As therapist, Megara suggested a fifth possibility: It was also by Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein (2016b), from the second volume of the *Stranger Things* album. The title of the track was “Time for 187.”

Listening to this piece had a profound effect on the client. Olivia, totally unexpectedly, started to cry: “This piece of music represents exactly how I feel – I want to RUN AWAY, and this running away is also a pattern that I need to break. I need to find the courage to voice my frustration and bear the consequences. Otherwise, I will never be happy or feel good enough.” Thus, for that particular moment and intention, this music did not work, although it released another emotion in the client. Olivia decided to return to the second piece of music (“Magneto”), which was initially rejected because of its energy.

Olivia said in her reflection:

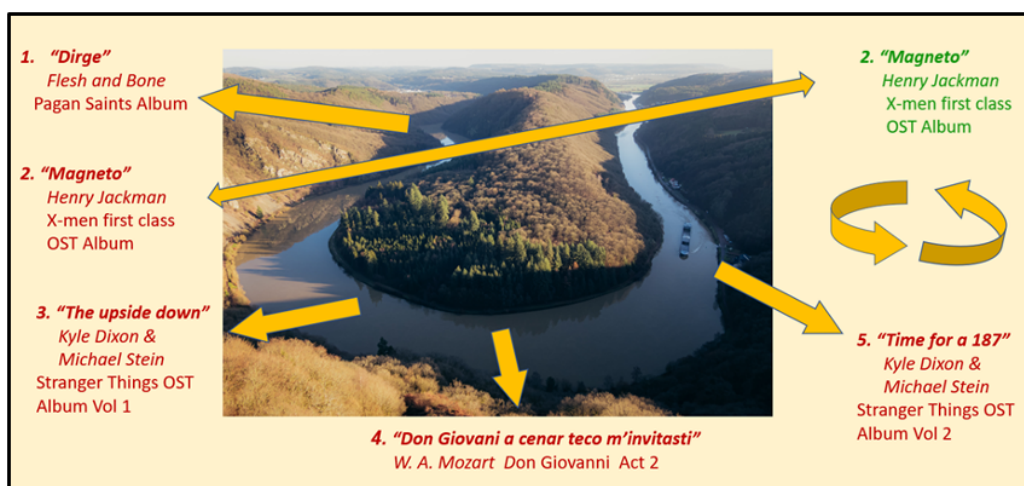
It was wonderful to be given the choice which music to use by the therapist, as two pieces were so well-suited, but the intention and the energy of the music were different. For me it was re-educative to let go of my anger in the drawing (Figure 12). I have never enjoyed breaking free and just go wild on the paper so much. This is certainly part of breaking free from the pattern.

Figure 12. Olivia’s image “Breaking the pattern.”



The image of the river (Figure 13) illustrates how the best piece for the moment was chosen. In the first session, the choice was easy, as the second piece was chosen after having listened to four. In the second session the piece that was initially “rejected” or “not found to be the best for the moment” is finally chosen after listening to other options.

Figure 13. Circular movement, returning to where we started.



Note: Photograph by Becker (2020).

Discussion

Our Integrated Story

The data from these six sessions brought four important themes to light. Through the process of choosing the right music, emotional involvement emerged as a clear theme. Personal growth was also a strong theme and due to this growth, another theme was the development of strong character traits. The theme of trust could be seen in our trio working together during feedback, reflections and discussions.

Emotions that were acknowledged included the anger and self-doubt that Megara wanted to “hear” in the music. Disappointment, doubt, confusion and even sadness were emotions evoked during music selection for Olivia, and selflessness and overwhelming and conflicting emotions were key elements in Mathilda’s music choices during her sessions. Most of these emotions were stimulated by the music choices. When clients demand particular qualities in the music, they are reviewing and consolidating their focus on a deeper level of consciousness. Besides, if we are playing a piece of music from their pool, this serves as a second prelude, experiencing more emotions, and going beyond the rational thinking expressed in the first verbal prelude.

Personal growth became evident in the discussions after sessions. We all felt that we learned something about ourselves after having been through a session. By listening to the different options of music, a clearer picture of what one needs in one’s own mind could be formed. The different contexts and ages of the participants were clear in the music pieces suggested. The authors clearly have different preferences ranging from Baroque and Classical to more contemporary, as well as soundtracks and modern music. Music from almost all eras was played, and sometimes the client would choose something totally unfamiliar to them, although it was clear that there was “safety” for them in the more familiar music. Also, returning to music that was initially found “not right for the moment” directly points to the personal growth and openness. The input of the therapist and the feedback by the witness were equally important in promoting clearer insight for the client, which also led to personal growth.

This further led to the development of strong character traits: The need for adaptability, gratitude, open-mindedness, love, flexibility and problem-solving skills all became evident in the data. The act of choosing the music thus had an essential function in the session’s progress, because each piece of music had elements that could contribute to the strengthening of the client. Any element in the music could play a role. The response may be initiated by the tempo, the orchestration, a new instrument, or a different dynamic.

We realised how essential the transition was in a session, especially if we are working at a re-educative level, because the “rejected music” leads to change in the client. By “rejected music” we mean the music that is played but not selected for the session. In our experience during intervision, it became clear that such music pieces played an important role in further sessions and should thus not be underestimated. It happened during our intervision sessions that music initially not chosen (or “rejected”) was ultimately the preferred piece, either later in the session, or in a follow-up session, or in a personal session. In all cases there were benefits for the client. Thus, music not “suited” in the moment can facilitate future journeys and open up pathways for later sessions. This can only lead to growth and better insight. Therefore, the therapist should play the pieces of music long enough for these changes to occur, or for the correct choices to be made.

Trust was a theme that came up in our feedback sessions as we started to work on our trioethnography. An invaluable aspect of intervision was how we became absolutely aware of the privilege to be involved in each other’s processes. We got to respect each other on a much deeper level in our various roles. We noticed the vulnerability in being the client, but also the therapist and the witness. We trusted each other. We trusted the witness to be

there, even in silence, as an active observer when we were client or therapist. We also trusted the music, that it would bring what we needed, and we trusted each other's music suggestions. We knew that each one had the other one's best interests at heart.

Trioethnography as Research Approach

Trioethnography is a relatively new approach to research in the music therapy field, as is the concept of intervision. Whilst the question we wanted to answer is "How do we experience the choosing of the right music?" we felt that some personal reflections on how we experienced using these methods (trioethnography and intervision) in answering the question would be helpful too.

We looked at ourselves, but also at each other as client, witness and therapist critically and created a new, combined story. The second tenet about being polyvocal and dialogic (Breault, 2016) is closely linked to the first tenet. In our case each contributor's views and opinions were included, even when these views differed. This challenged us in our process of growth, which is part of the disruption of the metanarrative. There were not only two, but three voices having enough space to be heard (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021). Questioning our self-beliefs was facilitated by the process, as there were opportunities for various perspectives.

In our trioethnography, differences are made clear in the research process and an openness is expected in the method (Norris & Sawyer, 2016). Differences can be seen in our choices of music, our cultural backgrounds, the languages we speak and our varied ages. Participant 1 and Participant 2 are both Spanish speaking, whilst Participant 3 does not understand Spanish at all. This meant that Participant 1 and Participant 2 needed to speak English, despite their language bond, for Participant 3's sake. Frustration was experienced and noticed by all, and Participant 3 emphasised how privileged she felt. This largely contributed to our growth, as we could discuss these differences openly. Sometimes, Participant 1 and Participant 2 spoke Spanish whilst Participant 3 watched the body language. This led to our collaborative understanding that we might sometimes misunderstand or misinterpret our clients. We also realised how the music can build a bridge over the gaps that are created by differences. Most importantly, we noticed that we did not have to apologise for our differences, but that we could use them to grow.

Through our differences there was an openness for new insights and transformation to emerge. Story and Beck (2017) reported on experiencing self in the music as well as deeper self-connection and self-awareness that led to self-empowerment. On the emotional level, resource-oriented MI helped with affect regulation. These outcomes are all consistent with what we found in the current study.

We developed a bond in our personal relationship based on mutual confidence and genuine care for each other. This promoted a therapeutic relationship in which, as a client, one could open up fearlessly; as a therapist, one could take care and gather information about the issue at hand, even in short processes; and as a witness, one could always give more objective feedback with absolute respect and empathy without being "intrusively" part of the process.

We came out of the process knowing ourselves better, as we had to become vulnerable and self-reflective in each other's presence. This is what Kinnear and Rugganan (2019) refer to when they speak about trustworthiness. We believe that this self-knowledge makes our writing more accessible to other readers. The eighth and ninth tenets of duoethnography have to do with an ethical stance. Ellis (2007) reminded us that when we write about ourselves, we also write about others, and that it was important to respect each other's privacy.

Realising that the honesty and vulnerability that were present in our discussions was a testament to our trust in each other. We became not only friendly researchers and

practitioners, but also friends (Breault et al., 2016; Ellis, 2007). As far as the theme of trust is concerned, this can be found in the tenets of the trioethnography method. The first tenet of the method, namely Curerre, the telling of our stories by looking at them analytically and integratively (Agosto et al., 2015), was evident in our intervision process.

Reflections and Implications

An important aspect of the whole process is to leave a trace of it, not only for us, but also so that the experiences and the reflections that this process gave rise to can be useful for others. This can possibly have implications for further applications of MI as method, as well as for intervision as a different way of approaching supervision and for researchers who are interested in the trioethnographic method. For us it was important to present the experience almost a year after we had conducted the process during our MI re-educative training, as this compelled us to give an external communicative dimension to what had been our internally shared experiences.

Reflecting together after some time, in putting this trioethnography together, allowed us to articulate another deep and valuable dimension to the process. We communicated our experience as clients, therapists and witnesses. Through sharing our findings, we grew as therapists.

The focus was on the process of music selection. Because of the unique situation that the music is collaboratively chosen by client and therapist, it is very possible during the transition that transferences can occur. This refers not only to transference on the client's part, but when a therapist offers music during the transition, she may also be influenced by her ghosts and desires to rescue the client, or by any other kind of countertransference. The witness plays an important role, and adds value here, in recognising such transferences and making the therapist and/or client aware of them.

Most music therapists realise the importance of regular and valuable supervision. We found that intervision was a different kind of supervision. We had an opportunity for reflection in the company of another. This kind of inter-reflection helps with self-regulation and to trust oneself and others can be applied in a broader field of music therapy practices. In our intervision group we found the presence of the witness invaluable in pointing out transference and countertransference. Paik-Maier (2016) alludes to the fact that transference and countertransference should be acknowledged and worked through. Just as we realised the key role of the witness in our trioethnography, Paik-Maier (2013) emphasises the importance of supervision in such cases, and how this ensures personal growth on the side of the therapist.

We also noticed that sometimes the river looked similar in different sessions, for example, when there were only two pieces of music explored, whilst at other times, we needed another picture to use as metaphor where finding the right music was more complex. This made us aware of the importance of remaining open in all sessions, as there is no fixed pattern or recipe when it comes to choosing the music.

Being introduced to new music and using it for personal sessions can only be described as enriching. We have started using each other's music for personal MI work. This led to a deeper understanding of our clients, and certainly contributed to our self-growth as therapists. In this way we can break our own patterns and evolve as individuals and therapists. This MI method gives opportunities for therapists to place their client's safety and pleasure right next to meeting their therapeutic needs by using their preferred music (Scott-Moncrieff, 2021). Through this process we have learned not only just how possible that is, but also how important.

Although we focused on the MI method within the CMGIM model, we strongly believe that other receptive music therapy methods and training can also benefit from exploring the process of choosing the music for a session. It could also be beneficial to discuss how

music is chosen with the client. Similarly, the music that the client chooses can be reflected on in terms of how one arrives at the final choice and how that can impact the outcome of the session or process.

Conclusion

In finding the answer to the question “How do we experience choosing the best music for the moment?” we used the data from our sessions. The method of selection for analysis was through application of the principles of trioethnography. The answer was clearly in creating the opportunity to listen to various possible pieces of music with an open mind, which proved to have positive outcomes. We have learned to be open-minded about music, allow our emotions to be involved and trust the process. The method of trioethnography also proved to be helpful for our personal growth, and even more for our growth as therapists. We found this to be an excellent way to train as therapists.

This kind of research can be extremely valuable, where the choosing of music includes the therapist inviting the client to select the music as well as expressing an openness to and insight into the client’s preference. This can be applied to other receptive music therapy methods as well. Furthermore, we feel that an intervision group, where we could learn from each other without fear of judgement, can be very useful in the clinical practice of all music therapists. Lastly, applying the research method of trioethnography was complex. We are living far apart in two different countries, and we have completely different practices. It was difficult to find common time for this work. Not ever being able to sit around a table and discussing the research project live, as we were so far apart, certainly presented some challenges. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the fact that we could not communicate in our mother tongue brought about some frustrations for all of us. However, we felt that we have grown through the process and the method is completely valid and valuable, especially in the setting of music therapy research.

About the Authors

Petra Jerling is a certified music psychotherapist in private practice in South Africa (Music and Well-being). She has recently submitted her PhD thesis which was completed at MASARA (Musical Arts in South Africa: Resources and Applications) at the North-West University. She is a qualified BMGIM and MI therapist, trained by Lisa Summer, and is a member of EAMI (European Association of Music and Imagery) and is on the steering committee of the Music Spirituality and Wellbeing Network and SA-ACAPAP (South African Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions). She has published in the *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, *Approaches*, *Religions*, *International Journal for Education and Arts*, and *Music Therapy Today*. She has presented papers at various national and international conferences.

Carmen Angulo Sánchez-Prieto trained as a pianist at the RCSM of Madrid. She obtained a master’s degree in Musik und Tanz Erziehung at the Orff-Institut, Salzburg (1984–1986). She then did Advanced Studies in the Doctoral Programme (University of Zaragoza, 1999). She spent her teaching career in music education at the Universities of Zaragoza and La Rioja until 2012, when she retired. She is the co-founder of the electronic journal *LEEME* on music education and was co-editor from 1997–2012. She is a Fellow of AMI since 2016, EAMI accredited member and EAMI Board officer (2020-2024). She was trained in CMGIM by Lisa Summer. Carmen maintains a private practice of MI and BMGIM.

Isabel Solana Rubio is music therapist in “Music therapy In Synchrony” and at the Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Unit in “Hospital Montepíncipe” (Madrid, Spain). She specialises in music therapy and medicine, music therapy for brain injury patients, entrainment methods (for chronic pain reduction); art therapy; grieving and end of life care; unified accompaniment; couples therapy; MI (Music and Imagery) therapy; GIM (Guided Imagery and Music) therapy; systemic and transpersonal therapy; bio-music; and instructing mindfulness and teaching yoga, especially with children, for pregnancy, and in therapy. She also has a degree in music pedagogy, in violoncello and in telecommunications (sound and image).

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Agosto, V., Marn, T., & Ramirez, R. (2015). Biracial place walkers on campus: A trioethnography of culture, climate and currere. *Review of Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 109–126. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.1525/irqr.2015.8.1.109>
- Alleyne-Johnson, E. (1992). Oxford suite part 1 [Track]. On *Purple Electric Violin Concerto*. Equation Records Ltd.
- Angulo, C., Solana I., & Jerling, P. A. (2021, October 23–24). *Selecting the best music for the moment: How do we choose?* [Paper presentation]. The 2nd Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music Symposium, Virtual Conference. Korean Music Therapy Education Association.
- Bach, J. S. (1997). Komm, süsßer tod BWV 478 [Track]. On *Leopold Stokowski*. Naxos. (Original work published 1736)
- Becker, N. (2020). *Boat floating on winding river in hilly terrain* [Photograph]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/boat-floating-on-winding-river-in-hilly-terrain-5668666/>
- Boccherini, L. (2017). Cello concerto no. 9 in B-flat major G 482: Adagio non troppo [Track]. On *Jacqueline du Pré: The heart of the cello*. Warner Classics. (Original work published 1770)
- Bonny, H. L. (2001). Music psychotherapy: Guided Imagery and Music. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v10i3.568>
- Breault, R. A. (2016). Emerging issues in duoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(6), 777–794. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1162866>
- Breault, R. A., Hackler, R., & Bradley, R. (2016). Seeking rigor in the search for identity: A trioethnography. In J. Norris, R. D. Sawyer & D. Lund (Eds.), *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research* (pp. 143–172). Routledge.
- Bruscia, K. E. (2015). *Notes on the practice of Guided Imagery and Music*. Barcelona Publishers.
- Chang, H. (2016). *Autoethnography as method*. Routledge.
- De Meer, W., & Rombout, T. (2003). *Intervisie: Een wegwijzer* (3rd ed.). Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.
- Dixon, K. & Stein, M. (2016a). The upside down [Track]. On *Stranger things volume 1*. Lakeshore and Ivada Records.
- Dixon, K. & Stein, M. (2016b). Time for a 187 [Track]. On *Stranger things volume 2*. Lakeshore and Ivada Records.

- Djawadi, R. (2019). Game of thrones theme [Track]. On *Wouter Kellerman: In A Different Light*. Varèse Sarabande. (Original work published 2011)
- Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives. Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(1), 3–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406294947>
- Fisk, T. (2022). *Aerial footage of a regulated river meander and yellow plants* [Photograph]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/aerial-footage-of-a-regulated-river-meander-and-yellow-plants-10921596/>
- Flesh & Bone (1999). Dirge [Track]. On *Pagan Saints*. Intersound Records.
- Henderson, P., Holloway, J., & Millar, A. (2014). *Practical supervision: How to become a supervisor for the helping professions*. Jessica Kingsley Press.
- Herold, C. (2021). Musik als Gefährtin im Alltag – Ein Therapieprozess basierend auf Modifikationen der Methode Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) [Music as a companion in everyday life – A therapeutic process with receptive music therapy based on modifications of the method Guided Imagery and Music (GIM)]. *Musiktherapeutische Umschau*, 1, 64–72. <https://doi.org/10.13109/muum.2021.42.1.64>
- Jackman, H. (2011). Magneto [Track]. On *X-men: First class*. Sony.
- Kilar, W. (1992). Dracula – The beginning [Song]. On *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Original motion picture soundtrack*. Columbia Records.
- Kinnear, L., & Ruggunan, S. (2019). Applying duoethnography to position researcher identity in management research. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v17i0.1056>
- Lacy, K. M. (2022). *Aerial view of a river* [Photograph]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/aerial-view-of-a-river-13766367/>
- Lastovich, T. (2017). *View of river* [Photograph]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/view-of-river-572689/>
- Lawes, M. J. (2022). On Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) as both part of music therapy and as separate from it. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v22i1.3448>
- Lloyd Webber, A. (1987). The phantom of the opera [Song]. On *The phantom of the opera*. Sony. (Original work published 1986)
- Lozano, A., Salinas, S., & Orozco, R. C. (2021). Constructing meaning of the term *Latinx*: A trioethnography through *Pláticas*. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(7), 1338–1355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.1930251>
- Mahler, G. (2009). Symphony no. 6: IV. Finale-Allegro Moderato [Track recorded by Boston Symphony Orchestra]. On *Mahler Symphony no. 6 – James Levine – Boston Symphony Orchestra*. BSO Classics. (Original work published 1904).
- Mancina, M. (2009). August's rhapsody in C major. [Track]. On *August Rush (Original score from the motion picture)*. Columbia Records.
- Montgomery, E. A. (2012). An Interview with Lisa Summer: Discussing GIM and its adaptations. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v12i1.642>
- Mottram, P. (2017a). Fireflies [Track]. On *Myriad*. Audio Network UK.
- Mottram, P. (2017b). Voyage of destiny [Track]. On *Myriad*. Audio Network UK.
- Mozart, A. W. (2012). Don Giovanni K. 527. Act 2: Don Giovanni, a cenar teco m'invitasti [Song]. On *Don Giovanni Mozart: Mahler Chamber Orchestra – Yannick Nézet-Séguin*. Deutsche Grammophon. (Original work published 1787)

- Norris, J., Sawyer, R. D., & Lund, D. (2016). *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research*. Routledge.
- Norris, J., & Sawyer, R. (2016). Towards a dialogic methodology. In J. Norris, R. D. Sawyer, & D. Lund (Eds.), *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research* (pp. 9–42). Routledge.
- Paik-Maier, S. (2010). Supportive Music and Imagery method. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v10i3.453>
- Paik-Maier, S. (2013). Music and Imagery self-experience in the clinical supervision of trainees in Guided Imagery and Music. In K. E. Bruscia (Ed.), *Self-experiences in music therapy education, training, and supervision*. (pp. 376–394). Barcelona Publishers.
- Paik-Maier, S. (2016). *An exploratory study of the processes of Supportive Music and Imagery therapy conducted in South Korea*. [Doctoral dissertation, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust/University of East London].
<https://repository.tavistockandportman.ac.uk/1798/1/Paik-Maier%20-%20An%20exploratory.pdf>
- Pinar, W. F. (1994). The method of “currere” (1975). *Counterpoints*, 2, 19–27.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED104766.pdf>
- Pinilis, L. (2011). *A Biblical view of time: Shifting from Chronos to Kairos*. Life of a steward. Retrieved November 13, 2022, from
<https://thepjournal.wordpress.com/2012/05/01/a-biblical-view-of-time-guest-post/>
- Pixabay. (2016). *Green trees surrounding lake* [Photograph]. Pexels.
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/green-trees-surrounding-lake-219972/>
- Petrajerling (2022). *Trioethnography playlist*. Spotify.
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6FXbgJqUmwuzB3ShW3VQs?si=bdf0ddac5622441a>
- Plenio, J. (2018) *River Thames in England* [Photograph]. Pexels.
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/river-thames-in-england-1637907/>
- Rogers-Shaw, C., Carr-Chellman, D., & Choi, J. (2021). A trioethnography of organic mentoring in the doctoral process. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership In Learning*, 29(4), 389–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2021.1952394>
- Sawyer, R. D., & Norris, J. (2013). *Duoethnography: Understanding qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Sawyer R. D., & Norris J. (2015). Duoethnography: A retrospective 10 years after. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2015.8.1.1>
- Schön, D. A. (1982). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Scott-Moncrieff, S. (2021, October 23-24). *Definition of the Continuum Model of GIM*. [Spotlight conference session]. The 2nd Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music Symposium, Virtual Conference. Korean Music Therapy Education Association.
- Scott-Moncrieff, S., Summer, L., & Montgomery, E. (2020). *Supervision handbook: Re-educative MI and GIM for Fellows*. Study guide. Institute for Music and Consciousness.
- Shostakovich, D. (2010). Symphony no. 10 in E major, Opus 93: II. Allegro [Track]. On *Shostakovich Symphony no. 10 – Vasily Petrenko*. Naxos. (Original work published 1953)
- Stevens, S., Dessner, B., Muhly, N., & McAlister, J. (2017a). Black energy [Track]. On *Planetarium*. 4AD.
- Stevens, S., Dessner, B., Muhly, N., & McAlister, J. (2017b). Sun [Track]. On *Planetarium*. 4AD.

- Story, K. M., & Beck, B. (2017). Guided Imagery and Music with female military veterans: An intervention development study. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 55*, 93–102. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2017.05.003>
- Summer, L. (1999, November 17–22). *Introduction to the Bonny method of Guided Imagery and Music* [Paper presentation]. 9th World Congress of Music Therapy, Washington, USA. https://www.musictherapy.org/assets/1/7/99_Final_Program.pdf
- Summer, L. (2011). Music therapy and depression: Uncovering resources in Music and Imagery. In A. Meadows (Ed.), *Developments in music therapy practice: Case study perspectives* (pp. 486–496). Barcelona Publishers.
- Summer, L. (2015). The journey of GIM training from self-exploration to a continuum of clinical practice. In D. Grocke & T. Moe (Eds.), *Guided Imagery & Music (GIM) and music imagery methods for individual and group therapy* (pp. 339–348). Jessica Kingsley.
- Summer, L. (2020). *The Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music: Definition and historical and publication timelines*. [Report]. World Federation of Music Therapy Education and Training Commission.
- Uematsu, N. (1997). Those chosen by the planet [Track]. On *Final Fantasy VII Original soundtrack*. DigiCube Square Enix.
- Vivaldi, A. (2010). Bassoon concerto in G minor R. 495: I. Presto [Track]. On *Vivaldi: concerti per fagotto*. Naïve. (Original work published 1720)
- Wolberg, L. R. (1977). *The technique of psychotherapy* (3rd ed., Part 1). Grune & Stratton.
- 2CELLOS (2015). Thunderstruck [Track]. On *Celloverse*. Sony.

¹ A small section of this study, using data from only two sessions, was presented at the 2nd International Symposium on the Continuum Model of Guided Imagery and Music which was held online in October 2021 (Angulo et al., 2021).

² All the music (except Flesh and Bone's "Dirge") can be heard on a Spotify playlist created for this study (Petrajerling, 2022).

³ These are the three participants' pseudonyms.