

EDITORIAL

The Great River of Humanity: Celebrating 25 Years of *Voices*

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As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, we reflect upon the spirit in which this open access journal was established¹. We think of the intention that was put into the naming of the journal and how significant it is to have a space that celebrates voices from all over the world. We find ourselves (again) at a point in our history where instead of marveling at our unique and shared existence as human beings on a small planet within a vast galaxy, we are forced to reflect on the various powers that create borders and demarcations of who can or cannot “legitimately” have their voices and humanity acknowledged and celebrated. Twenty five years after its inception, this shared community space that *Voices* works hard to foster, feels incredibly important. And in this 25th year of the journal, we celebrate the diverse collection of voices that have and continue to advance the values and purpose that was proposed by co-creators of *Voices*, Carolyn Kenny (who we center in this editorial) and Brynjulf Stige (who will join us for the next editorial).

Carolyn Kenny embodied the coming together of a diversity of voices. She was born to a Choctaw mother and first-generation Ukrainian father and later adopted into the Haida nation. She had a gentle and yet fiercely passionate presence, and a commitment to service, to community, to Indigenous knowledges, and to making a better future for generations to come. As a scholar, she traveled widely and shared her ideas and knowledge with so many in the music therapy community. As a mentor, she was encouraging and yet incisive. And all the while she was a passionate advocate for the inclusion of voices that were not widely attended to within music therapy. Carolyn valued interconnectedness and believed that our well-being and humanity are bound to each other. With the allyship of Brynjulf Stige, who shared so many of Carolyn’s values, they worked to make *Voices* truly a world forum and one that could be accessed freely—values of deep personal importance to both of them.

This spirit of allyship and centering the voices of Indigenous practitioners continues to

¹ For a fuller account of the history of *Voices*, please read Ikuno et al. (2021).

be honored in *Voices*. In this issue, for example, Kaitlyn Kasha, Tiffany Sparrow Brulotte, Tatyana Dobrowolski, Tinaya Iron-Entz, and Elizabeth Mitchell share personal narratives of their lived experiences when engaging in allyship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous music therapy practitioners in Canada. Through their research, they have co-developed a framework for allyship and hope that these dimensions of allyship can be absorbed and adopted within music therapy as a means of generating opportunities for reconciliation.

Carolyn's metaphor of the great river of humanity that undergirds and unites all music therapy practice is inspiration for Hakeem Leonard's reflections on promoting reflexive thinking in music therapy. Leonard, writing from the US, draws lines among Indigenous ways of being, resource-oriented understandings of music therapy, and social justice framing, to examine possibilities for redefining music therapy.

Like Leonard, we wish to summon forth Carolyn's theoretical contributions, interwoven with Indigenous teachings, that recognize that spaces like we aspire to at *Voices*, that have a spirit of creating and connecting, can become healing spaces. Through this connectedness, we are joined "to the great river—the artery that flows through all of humanity and all living things" (Kenny, 2014, *Write it Down*, para. 6). The river still flows and 25 years of voices openly flowing from this journal, is a testament to that.

Also in This Issue

Madeleine Eves explores the meaning and use of Irish traditional music among Northern Irish music therapists in a qualitative research study. The therapists' musical and cultural upbringing impacted how they related to such music in practice.

With contributions from Reg, Ina, Michael and Matthew, Sophie Sabri traces the formation and flourishing of the Rocking Rainbows band. The disabled musicians in this New Zealand band share their perspectives and memories while reflecting on their engagements at music festivals and in popular media.

Framed within a culturally responsive and family centered approach, Anna Buonomo, Maria Minichino, Barbara Sgobbi, Isabella Bianchi, and Marcello Napolitano describe the establishment and implementation of a music therapy program within neonatal intensive care in Italy. Their interdisciplinary collaboration pairs music therapy with positive touch, kangaroo care, and babywearing.

Through reflecting upon two cases from an ethnographic enquiry of music therapy in prison, Norwegian music therapist, Kjetil Hjørnevik, explores the concept of the *musicking persona* and how styles of musical participation contribute to incarcerated adults' emerging identities as musicians.

Also utilizing an exploratory case study design, Jaana Ruotsalainen, Annika Tammela, and Andrew Danso employ interactive musicking to facilitate communication and engagement with a Finnish 90-year-old female Second World War veteran with advanced dementia. Their research reveals that various forms of interactive music making differentially evoke autobiographical memories, stimulate motor activation, and improve affective responses.

From the US, Sylvia Grace Smith and Melody Schwantes have developed a clinical protocol for a resource-oriented approach to music therapy work with adults with autoimmune disease and accompanying mood disorders. Their feasibility study outlines their clinical approach and music therapy interventions, which provides a helpful model for others working within this context.

Augmenting the literature on adolescents' relationship to music, Gulnara Minkinen, Josefiina Pajunen, Esa Ala-Ruona, and Suvi Saarikallio make a unique contribution by exploring Finnish adolescents' use of music for relaxation. Music-facilitated relaxation was

strongest among those with more in-depth personal relationship to music.

Exploring the lived clinical training experiences of US undergraduate music therapy students through Memory Work methodology, Varvara Pasiali, Corey Jenkins, Gabrielle Kornmayer, Matrisha Stafford, Karlyn Moore, Menelik Cannady, Nicole Crate, and Austin McGinnis found several important aspects that play a role in professional growth and preparedness for professional practice.

Also exploring the lived experiences of clinicians, Kay Lai, explores how the identities of LGBTQ+ therapists in the UK impact their therapeutic practices and relationships with service users who share similar identities in terms of relational depth, therapeutic flexibility, and structuring environments that foster safety and inclusion.

While several recent studies have explored workplace satisfaction and experiences of burnout of current music therapists, Sara Langenberger's research examines the workplace attitudes of former music therapists in the US to gain greater understanding of why music therapists leave the profession and provides insights into areas that institutions can focus attention on in terms of advocacy and resources.

In Memoriam

In the spirit of *Voices'* focus on interconnectedness, and the preservation of diverse, foundational voices in music therapy, we would like to acknowledge the lives and work of Dr. Darlene Brooks, Dr. Cathy H. McKinney, Dr. Kimmo Lehtonen, and Dr. Mary Ellen Wylie. Their contributions and influence through the lives they have shaped will continue to be felt and appreciated within various music therapy communities.

Appreciation

We would like to thank several people who have concluded service with *Voices* in 2026: Tim Honig for his invaluable service in several roles over the years, including journal editor, article editor, and copyeditor; and Xavi Saldes Marti for his important service on the communications team. We thank Haruna Inagaki who goes out of a formal role as layout editor. Haruna's dedication and eye for detail in formatting templates, and training us to do this work, is so greatly appreciated. We will miss her in this role, and have been grateful for her offers of help when we are in a crunch. We also heartily thank Maren Metell for tireless efforts to connect new submissions to engaged article editors. Maren will shift her focus to center on accessibility needs and will join us as an article editor. We are also appreciative of Elly Scrine who has moved from the role of Article Editor to Copyeditor. We appreciate that Elly can continue on with us in this new capacity. And, we are very happy to welcome back Michael Viega to the *Voices* team as Article Editor!

We would also like to thank the article editors, peer reviewers, and copyeditors who volunteered their time, energy, and voices within the evolving process of the articles in this issue.

References

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