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A Study of Music Therapy as a Vocation

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A STUDY OF MUSIC THERAPY AS A VOCATION

A Prospectus
Presented to
the Honors Program
Ouachita Baptist University

paper # 27

by
Juanita Jannette Nicholson
January 16, 1967

INTRODUCTION

Music has therapeutic value because it is not restricted by verbal means and therefore deals directly with the mind and the emotions. This fact is expressed very aptly by Dr. Jules H. Masserman, Professor of Nervous and Mental Diseases at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois:

...sound is one of the few senses which the individual can neither exclude nor escape from with ease...and...the particular modalities of sound we call music contain, despite the wide range of cultural variations, the nucleus of a universal language understood by all of humankind.¹

I am interested in music therapy as a vocation because it offers the musician an endless variety of areas in which to work. A career in music therapy requires a working knowledge of all areas of music as well as training in psychology. In addition, a general background in many other subject areas is needed.

Although I have not definitely decided to pursue music therapy as a career, any study I do in this area will be beneficial to me as a music teacher.

¹Esther Goetz Gilliland (ed.), Music Therapy (Chicago: National Association for Music Therapy, 1953), II, 186.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of the study I will do next semester is (1) to define music therapy; (2) to find what training is necessary to enter the field; (3) to find what career opportunities are available; (4) to study the development of music therapy and note any changes in the concept of music as a therapy.

Importance of the study. For centuries man has known that all people react in some way to musical stimuli, but to use music as a specific medical treatment is a relatively new idea. A general knowledge of what is meant by "music therapy" and what this field has to offer will be beneficial to any interested music or psychology major. It will also be profitable to include in a study of this kind what progress is being made and what changes are taking place.

II. DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Exceptional children. Those children who differ from normalcy in endowment and ability are referred to as "exceptional". This term indicates that these children are in need of different training methods than the ordinary child.

Schizophrenic. A person having a mental disorder characterized by indifference, withdrawal, hallucinations, and delusions of persecution and omnipotence is said to be

schizophrenic. Often there is no impaired intelligence, and the term avoids the implications of age and deterioration.

Neurotic or psychoneurotic. A person having any of various psychic, or mental, disorders characterized by special combinations of anxieties, compulsions, obsessions, phobias, and motor manifestations is referred to as psychoneurotic. Psychoneurosis results only in partial disorganization of the personality and is less serious than a psychosis.

Psychotic. In psychiatry, this refers to a person having a mental disorder in which the personality is very seriously disorganized. In psychology, it is any mental state or process.

Autistic. The person who possesses a state of mind characterized by daydreaming, hallucinations, and disregard of external reality is referred to as autistic. The autistic child is very sensitive but uncommunicative.

III. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Music therapy is not only used in the treatment of the mentally and physically handicapped, and in the emotionally and socially maladjusted, but the basic ideas are also practically applied in industry. My study will not include the industrial methods, but will deal mainly with handicapped and maladjusted children, and the progress being made in these areas.

IV. SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Sources. Possible sources of information for this study are (1) the Journal of Music Therapy, one issue of which includes a complete bibliography of all published articles and research on music therapy; (2) the annual Books of Proceedings, published by the National Association for Music Therapy, which contains the papers, addresses, panels, and other information given at each of the national meetings from 1951 through 1962; and (3) all available periodicals and pamphlets.

Treatment of data. I plan to investigate various university bulletins and compile a list of the general requirements for a major in music therapy. By writing the National Association for Music Therapy and the placement offices of several accredited institutions, I can find what specific employment is available to music therapists.

To discover what new ideas are being incorporated into music therapy I will study the Books of Proceedings and compare the first editions with the later ones. By reading the actual addresses and discussions which took place, I can gain insight into the attitudes taken toward music therapy and how these attitudes have changed through the years.

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