Having Courage to Create

Creation was spoken
with one sound,
Be . . .
The meaning of the Sound
and its Resonance
are One . . .

—Jalaluddin Rumi (1987, p. 86)
Rumi: We Are Three

In looking back on my two-year tenure as Editor of Music Therapy, I view this privileged responsibility as an intensive and extensive journey full of marvelous challenge, immeasurable reward, and exciting growth. During it, I experienced emotional depths, breadths, and heights—joy, anguish, peacefulness, anxiety, gratification, frustration—peaks and valleys and plateaus without which, it appears, creative effort cannot come alive and culminate in action. So, in accordance with the precept to have the courage to create—and this means in unlimited forms and on unchartered paths—I am putting out the word that, while we may need the safety of having our journal be, to a degree, “tried and true,” we need to have the courage to move into new and untried paths. Otherwise, will our profession prosper? Will we actualize as music therapists? As human beings?

With these thoughts in mind, allow me to step back and ask why it is that we “happen” to read or reread a book at a particular time. It seems eons ago that I read Rollo May’s (1976) The Courage to Create. And one day in this past year, I just “happened” to reach for my well-worn copy of this book from among the many books on my many bookshelves. It was the catalyst I needed to inspire the continuing of an everlasting living dialogue that was opened up in the 1988 volume of the American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) journal. Specifically, it related directly to the ideas expressed in the “Opening Notes” of that volume. For in May’s view:
a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and ... commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions made from day to day. These decisions require courage. This is why Paul Tillich speaks of courage as ontological—it is essential to our being. (1976, p.5)

With beauty of thought, feeling, and wisdom, May goes on to remind us that "creative courage" is ... the discovery of new forms, new symbols, new patterns. Every profession can and does require ... creative courage" (p.14). Rollo May! You are singing to us loud and clear . . .

As I reread his words, I experienced a kind of déjà vu, recalling that I had written in the Opening Notes of Music Therapy Volume 7:

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are making choices from moment to moment. When we know that we are in this process—when we are consciously aware of making decisions about making choices—we become empowered to be autonomous, 'fully-human' beings. (Boxill, 1988, p. 1)

When I wrote these thoughts, I had no conscious memory of having read similar ones some years ago. They may, however, have made a trace on my brain/mind/heart. Will I ever know if my perception about being empowered by the courage to make decisions—of becoming fully human—of creating a better world—took root from The Courage to Create? What intrigued me was that I "happened" to renew my deep connection with this particular book at this particular time; that I "knew" I desired its guidance; that it surfaced to support the ideas that had been whirling around in my mind: Ways to encourage AAMT members to have the courage and heart to create an ever-better journal BY CONTRIBUTING TO IT.

The realization that courage, heart, and creativity are very essences of living and becoming gives rise to questions: Are we aware of this realization on conscious levels? Aware that we are creating our own selves every moment? Aware of the courage—the heart—that it takes to actively experience living on its many-layered levels and dimensions?

From the moment of our birth, our arrival on this earth is a creative act. And, every breath we take, whether automatic or consciously produced, is of our own creating. Yet, do we acknowledge it for the self-empowering, life-giving process that it is? Where are the teachers—the masters—who can guide us to learn to glory in these miraculous phenomena, learn the attitude and ability to value our smallest achievement—learn from the child at play?

The existentialist would say that we invent ourselves by virtue of the multitude of choices we make. I would then ask how we are to develop

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1The word "courage" comes from the same stem as the French word "coeur," meaning heart.
this inventiveness. Perhaps the theme of the song "Heart" from the musical Damn Yankees—We have to have heart, miles and miles of heart—might give us an inkling . . .

It is my strong belief that as the journal grows in quality and significance and scope, each one of us needs to help continue the momentum that has been built up. This means expanding one’s vision, valuing one’s own work in the field, and taking steps to “put it out there” in writing. It means creating ways of describing what you are experiencing with your clients—your feelings, their feelings; your concerns, their concerns; your growth, their growth; your anguish, their anguish; your joy, their joy; your assessment of the music therapy processes, their assessment of the processes; your development as music therapist, their development as client . . .

Share. Share. Share. Seek help. Ask for advice. Reveal your concerns about putting down on paper your thoughts, your ideas, your experiences, your approaches, your techniques, your discoveries, your experiments, your explorations, your uncertainties, your insecurities, your sense of failure, your sense of success. How does one describe the intricacies—the delicate complex nuances—of client responses to music therapy processes? How does one describe one’s own emotions, feelings, thoughts, responses to these processes? To being a music therapist? How?

Let this excerpt from a letter sent to me by a revered pioneer in our field, Clive Robbins, serve as an inspiration and help give you the courage to realize your highest purpose in the field that you have chosen to pursue:

Congratulations on Music Therapy, Vol. 7, No.1. Thank you and your colleagues for bringing this landmark edition into existence. As a profession, we are arriving on a liberating new level of looking at the reality and dynamics of music therapy. The Journal is bringing us—collectively and individually—to expressing appreciations of music therapy we have all known in the depths of our beings, and which are fundamentally the reasons we became music therapists, but which we have rarely fully articulated and shared for lack of acceptance and a worthy forum. Now the Journal is that forum. It is coming into its own reality as the instrument of the great science/art/spiritual life whose name it bears. We are in a long awaited time of change, and it is a thrilling time to be living a music therapy life.

Sometime in the fairly near future, Carol and I would like to join in this “everlasting living dialogue”—and it is great to be in the process of coming home to where this dialogue is a creative social force . . .

Clive Robbins
Inspiriting! Yes, indeed! Thank you, Clive Robbins, for your beautifully expressed understanding and appreciation of *Music Therapy, Volume 7* and your most welcome words of encouragement to carry on the "everlasting living dialogue" initiated in that issue. Although the seeds for it were planted, as yet they have hardly taken root in substantial measure among AAMT members. Can we now continue to nourish and cultivate these seeds—watch them sprout and grow?

The theme “Music Therapy for Living”—a sequel to that of the 1988 special issue—is a broad concept and, therefore, subject to broad interpretation and application. As I went through the initial process of selecting the material submitted for possible publication in this volume, relationships that formed loose, yet curiously enough defined connections, began to emerge. The call for papers and statements in the AAMT newsletter “Tuning In” (Fall of 1988) and the Invitational Letter (see p. 6) yielded submissions from several AAMT members. In communications to me, they viewed their writings as relevant to what they considered a thought-provoking theme. This issue includes a number of these articles and statements.

In light of the fact that a "living dialogue" is by its very nature heuristic, it would be truly exciting if music therapists would take up the cudgels and *design* a dialogue, interacting with colleagues and getting to know more about what others in our field are thinking, doing, feeling: Agreeing, disagreeing, taking risks, stirring up controversial ideas, resolving differences, asking questions, giving possible solutions—singing out consonances, sounding out dissonances, ringing out harmonious tones . . .

By the way—allow me to accent my support with an empathic plea and the impassioned thought to have the courage to create!

I extend heartfelt thanks to:
- The Editorial Board, who gave generously of their acumen;
- Marcia Broucek, whose work entailed multifaceted processes that have lead to the production of this volume of the journal;
- Gillian Stephens Langdon, who faithfully served as Editorial Assistant;
- David Marcus, who assiduously checked references;
- All the authors who contributed to this issue.

Success!—to the next Editor, Gillian Stephens Langdon.
REFERENCES


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