

## EDITORIAL

# Advancing knowledge in music therapy

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Dr Elizabeth Coombes is a music therapist, researcher and educator. She is the course leader of the MA Music Therapy training at the University of South Wales. The identity of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century music therapist is at the core of her research, including how the profession can influence the practice of other healthcare professions. [Elizabeth.coombes@southwales.ac.uk]

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It is now over 20 years since Ernest Boyer – an educator from the US and, amongst other posts, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching – published his influential piece *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1999). In this document, he sought to broaden the notion of scholarship as considered in universities in his homeland. He felt that the term ‘scholarship’ was inextricably linked with the concept of research, meaning that expected scholarly outputs were peer-reviewed journal papers and conference presentations. Seeking to acknowledge and bring value to the range of work that scholars were undertaking, he developed a paradigm that sought to clarify and make more visible the range of applied and written work being produced. He proposed four elements of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. In his view, this could allow for a free flow of thinking between different aspects of scholarly work and encourage a more cyclical journey for those working in academic institutions. His initial thinking utilised what could be described as a non-hierarchical taxonomy of scholarship as shown in the table below (Table 1) that I have adapted to bring it closer to the world of music therapy (Coombes, 2021).

Boyer's elements	Field of impact
Discovery	Research/evaluation projects.
Integration	Interdisciplinary work and discourse.
Application	Clinical work/development of methods.
Teaching	Sharing learning through teaching/informing a range of populations including students, professionals and the general public.

**Table 1:** Boyer's model of scholarship (adapted by Coombes, 2021)

The current position of music therapy scholarship is continuing to develop with an increasing number of practitioners and researchers choosing to share their work in a variety of ways. In her article of 2014, Wheeler explores the different types of research and music therapy writings that exist. She

suggests that these varieties exist according to the level of development of the profession in certain parts of the world. I also wonder whether this is true when we consider the scholarly development of individual music therapists. It can be daunting for individual practitioners to find a way to launch themselves into the world of research and writing in many professions. By offering a range of submission genres and encouraging participation in journals in a variety of forms, professional development for music therapists is promoted. This has the potential to lead to increased participation in scholarly activity with potential implications for the music therapy profession in general.

Viewing music therapy scholarship in this expanded paradigm, allows a more flexible framework for the development of our knowledge base. These wider parameters of discourse facilitate a broad range of voices that are able to participate in the generation of knowledge in the field.

The current issue of *Approaches* with its range of publication types could be seen in the light of this paradigm. Once we acknowledge this broadening of the scope of scholarship, it becomes clear that we can underpin the evidence base for music therapy work with a wider range of outputs, while also facilitating an increased range of voices participating in music therapy discourse.

In this issue we see a range of writing that offers us the opportunity to experience the richness of developing scholarship in our profession. The issue contains five articles, five book reviews, three conference reports and a letter to the editor responding to a book review published in a previous issue. Kathleen Skinner, Ashley Kurkiiian and Heidi Ahonen have contributed two articles that scope and explore Bruscia's clinical techniques for improvisational music therapy. Ana Rita Maia and Jose Morgado use the Sounds of Intent framework with a specific population in music therapy work, while Alberto Balducci provides a clinical report framed within the concept of forms of vitality (Stern, 2010) and microanalysis. Therapeutic Music Training (TMT), a method devised by Cheryl Jones, brings us to yet another realm of music therapy practice, describing a method of achieving therapeutic work using instrumental pedagogy. Viewing these through Boyer's lens enables us to see an exciting range of research, interdisciplinary discourse and practice that speaks very much to the values of the journal. *Approaches* promotes interdisciplinary dialogue and mutual exchange, welcoming contributions from a broad field of related disciplines. It seems that this is reflected in the aforementioned articles, and also in the content of the other publication genres included here.

The book reviews included in this issue engage critically with texts that contain early music therapy writings from 1951-60, new music therapy models including transpersonal and Guided Imagery and Music developments, a revisiting of the work of Bakhtin relating to music therapy improvisation and Hanser's book that explores music therapy through the lens of an integrative health perspective. This latter review stimulated a letter to the editor that promotes further critical dialogue in the field. In addition, conference reports offer the readership insight into three events that demonstrate the wealth of knowledge being offered within the music therapy profession. These reports focusing on music and medicine, autism and embodiment in music can be linked to Boyer's 'teaching' element as categorised in Table 1.

I hope that using Boyer's revisioning of the concept of scholarship to reflect on the contents of the issue encourages practitioners and researchers to reconsider and expand their contributions to the music therapy body of knowledge. Using this paradigm as a starting point there is the potential to stimulate debate and discourse by demonstrating the value of diverse ways of advancing knowledge in music therapy while we shift between different positions and within different frameworks.

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