

The Journey by Train: Creative Music Therapy with a 17-Year-Old Boy

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This case study describes one year of treatment with a 17-year-old boy who was seen at the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Clinic at New York University. He has numerous developmental delays, as well as emotional handicaps triggered by, among other things, a history of abuse. However, a major strength for him is his intense connection to music. He brought to the sessions a children's fantasy, which he adapted to include some elements in his life. This article describes our clinical journey through three phases of treatment, discussing how music was used to elaborate the drama, engage the client, and bring about change. Audiotape excerpts are included.

Introduction

"She's wearing a red bow! No, a pink bow! No, blue!" Joey barely contains his excitement as he describes his visual image of "Lady Lovely Locks," princess of a magical kingdom. This 17-year-old boy was obsessed with a children's story that he brought to music therapy with an enthusiasm rarely seen outside of sessions.

Joey has numerous developmental delays as well as emotional handicaps triggered by, among other things, sexual abuse. He was seen by a team of music therapists: Alan Turry, as primary therapist creating the music, and Michele Schnur Ritholz, collaborating as co-therapist. This case study illustrates how his story was used in treatment and focuses on the clinical issues encountered on our journey with him. The study is organized into three phases of the

treatment process, which took place during one year of individual music therapy at the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Clinic at New York University.

History

At 18 months of age, Joey, an only child, was not achieving the average milestones in terms of physical growth. At age 2, he was still not using words. Concerned about this, his mother brought him to both speech and occupational therapists. This was the first in a long line of consultations with helping professionals. When Joey was 3, two events occurred that compounded his already difficult development: his parents divorced, and he moved with his mother from the suburbs to a large city. Understandably, these events had a great effect on his emotional state. His mother described him as being difficult to manage at that time due to extreme hyperactivity. Behavior therapy was initiated to increase his cooperation and listening skills.

Joey was developing his strengths slowly. He had a great love of art and music. His mother used songs to encourage language and, from an early age, Joey had displayed an ability to memorize melodies and learn complete songs. He was a lively child, very interested in people, and willing to explore new things without hesitation. Books were also a fascination for him, and he enjoyed having stories told to him. He often created his own tales that seemed to reflect events in his life.

During his years in elementary school, Joey was moved from school to school in an effort to best place him. Understanding how to proceed with his education was not easy: He presented a complex picture. He functioned well in some areas but was quite delayed in others. An array of physical and neurological disabilities became more evident, including difficulties in coordination, balance, and motor tasks. Testing revealed moderate intellectual impairment, deficits in language processing, distractibility, and problems with articulation.

He continued therapy in various forms. During treatment with a psychologist when he was 10 years old, Joey revealed that he had been sexually abused by his paternal grandfather. This was

expressed indirectly by Joey during psychological testing, in drawings, and in play therapy, where he re-enacted the events that took place in the grandfather's home. Allegedly, Joey had been taken to the basement by the grandfather who had gained Joey's compliance by threatening to put him in the washer and dryer. These events were never admitted by the grandfather.

Joey's mother had tried to work through the issues with the family members involved. Her desperate concern was that he get beyond his past traumas and move on with his life. This was not addressed to her satisfaction until he was seen in a program for abused adolescents at the age of 12. This led to work in art therapy and drama therapy.

At the time of the music therapy sessions, Joey was living with his mother and her boyfriend, and he looked forward to seeing his natural father on weekends. He was attending a special school in a self-contained life-skills class, where he tended to isolate himself from peers. This was thought to be due more to emotional issues rather than intellectual deficits. At school he participated in speech, language, and occupational therapies. In addition, he attended counseling sessions twice weekly, where the focus was on activities of daily living and problem solving. His counselor noted that he was quite stubborn and displayed perseverance in childish games that he initiated; he was more interested in activities suitable for a small child than for a teen-ager.

Group Music Therapy

Joey was nearly 17 years old when he began attending the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Clinic. His mother had inquired into the possibility of music therapy because she felt strongly about its potential to engage Joey. He was placed in a group with two other boys to encourage his relationships with peers.

During initial group music therapy sessions¹ it was immediately evident that a major strength for Joey was his deep connec-

¹These initial sessions were conducted with Alan Turry and Laura Beer, another music therapist at the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Clinic.

tion to music. Though his history and testing revealed deficits in many areas, in music therapy he was a very engaging boy who displayed musical intelligence and a sense of humor that was quite surprising at times. He had a very strong sense of rhythm and a keen memory for melodic phrases. He responded joyfully and easily got excited when he played rhythms in synchrony with the therapist. However, his playing could become impulsive, and his excitement could lead to a loss of control.

Audio Excerpt #1: Group Therapy Drumming

In the first audio excerpt (Side B of the accompanying tape), Joey plays the drum as Alan improvises for the group. The drumming is forceful, louder than the other members. After imitating Alan's rhythmic idea, Joey accelerates and loses his connection with the pulse of the music.

Although at times Joey's exuberance was a positive force in the group, his activity was directed toward the therapists. It was difficult for him to initiate social contact with his peers. He got very insistent in trying to control events in the sessions and became rigidly attached to activities or objects—such as the constant use of a particular drum. He also had difficulty staying with a quiet thoughtful mood.

In one session, when Joey sat quietly listening to slow lyrical music that was improvised, he responded by being still, calm, apparently thoughtful. This was an obvious contrast to his typical behavior. When this information was shared with his mother, she felt this emotionally laden music was accurately reflecting his deep inner hurt and encouraged us to continue this musical approach with him. She urged us to consider individual music therapy sessions for him. The staff agreed that Joey should begin individual work as well as continue to attend group sessions.

Individual Music Therapy

Joey began individual music therapy in September of his second year as a client at the Clinic. The early course of his individual treatment was largely determined by his insistence on sharing his favorite story with his individual therapists, Alan Turry and

Michele Schnur Ritholz. As his therapists, we felt it important to work with his fantasy so he would know that his ideas were not merely accepted but also that their significance to him was acknowledged. Psychotherapists Mills and Crowley (1974) write that fantasy has "its important and diversified uses, both as a source of fun and a mirror of the child's inner life process. Hidden fears can be expressed, unspoken desires depicted, and problems acted out, all through fantasy" (pp. 38-39).

We saw Joey's initial fantasy as having musical and clinical potential beyond its original form. His love of music gave us the opportunity to focus on the *music* in the therapy process and, through it, the development of a co-active, co-creative relationship. We sensed that incorporating his story in music therapy could serve as an opportunity to cultivate his verbal capabilities, imagination, musical sensitivities, and emotional life.

Nordoff and Robbins (1971) describe music's ability to "lead or accompany the psyche through all conditions of inner experience" (p.15) and emphasize that, for creative music therapists,

all the compositional styles evolved during the last seven centuries, all the folk music, the idioms, the elements of music, the very notes themselves—even the smallest expressive and structural components—become significant in countless, undreamed-of ways. (p. 142)

In Joey's treatment, elements such as melodic and harmonic structure, rhythmic style, tempo, modes, and phrasing were used both intuitively and deliberately as clinical tools. Themes and songs were either created as complete forms or evolved over time. They became dependable for Joey; he joyfully anticipated them, developed trust in them, and so they became a world in which he could live fully.

In order to illuminate the process that took place in Joey's treatment, we have organized this case study into three phases, discussing particular clinical issues as they arose:

1. The telling and musical articulation of the client's story
2. The therapists' clinical decision to alter the story
3. The clinical determination that a new story be used

1. The Story

The basic story that Joey brought to the sessions was one that he had seen on videotape describing a magical land and encompassing many of the archetypal images inherent in fairy tales. The main characters in the story were the heroine, Lady Lovely Locks, a good and brave princess; magical beings called pixie tails, who lived in her hair; the evil Duchess Raven Waves, who was intent on cutting off Lady Lovely Locks' hair so she could take over the kingdom; and the princess's dog named Silky Pup.

Joey had watched the commercially available video, read the text to the accompanying coloring books countless times, and insisted on playing with Lady Lovely Locks dolls in what had been described as a "perseverative manner."

During the first five music therapy sessions, Joey shared the basic story, and its accompanying music unfolded in a collaborative fashion. Michele encouraged Joey to narrate, and Alan improvised music to reflect the emotional tone and story content. Joey's words were set to music as he spoke them.

Joey adapted the story to include events and places in his life, such as Patterson Village, where he lived as a child. He also included his own associations, especially through the female Silky Pup. He integrated personal themes from his past to create his own unique version of this video fantasy. His ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality enabled us to proceed without threatening his stability.

The following are the basic events of the story as Joey told it, with selected musical portions and dialogues found on Side B of the accompanying tape, narrated by Michele. The journey by train begins . . .

A passenger train with Lady Lovely Locks on board leaves New York City and heads for Patterson Village.²

²Joey's personal adaptations of the original story are underlined.

Audio Excerpt #2: Patterson Village by Train³

M: There was a train at the station. The conductor was calling all the passengers . . . All aboard, everybody get on!

J: Yeah . . .

M: We're going to . . .

J,M: Patterson Village.

Song: "We're Going to Patterson Village by Train"

M: Keep it going!



The rhythmic pattern in the bass of the piano gives an aural representation of the train's power and movement, while the train whistle helps to enhance the story. The repetition of the melody allows Joey to live in and identify with lyric content as the harmony leads to unexpected places. He uses the zebra skin drum, which he calls the "furry" drum. It is his favorite—and he insists on beating it, despite its lack of dynamic range—or perhaps because of this.

Lady Lovely Locks steps off the train and greets Joey.

Audio Excerpt #3: Tying a Bow

J: All right, now what?

M: Well, Lady Lovely Locks steps off the train, and she ties a beautiful bow in her hair.

J: Purple bow.

M: A purple bow.

J: No, a blue bow.

M: Blue. Okay.

Song: "She's Tying a Bow in Her Colorful Hair"

³For all dialogues, "M" refers to Michele Schnur Ritholz, "A" refers to Alan Turry, "J" refers to Joey.

M: Her colorful hair.

J,M: She's tying a (blue) bow in her magical hair.

All: In her magical, rainbow-colored hair.

She's ty - ing a bow She's ty - ing a bow She's ty - ing a bow in her mag - i - cal hair

The 3/4 meter and repeating bass tone help to create a gentle mood. Joey sings the ascending melodic sequence, which encourages an expansion of his vocal range. After singing, he seems to turn inward, losing his focus, but is engaged again by his interest in the music and the character. In a contrasting section, we work on fostering greater control and flexibility as he plays the drum and cymbal.

Lady Lovely Locks gets back on the train and travels to the Kingdom of Lovely Locks without Joey. When she arrives, Silky Pup greets her and demands to be fed.

Audio Excerpt #4: Take Care of Me, I'm Hungry

M: She's very hungry!

J: Why?

M: Well, Lady Lovely Locks has been away. Do you know what Silky Pup says?

J: What?

Song: "Take Care of Me, I'm Hungry (I have no food to eat)"

J: Yeah, and I'm thirsty, too.

J: [singing] Take care of me, I'm thirsty, I'd like some more to drink.

All: [singing] Take care of me I'm thirsty, I'd like some more to drink!



Joey's request for care is amplified musically through accent, repetition, and dissonance.

A storm is brewing and out of the grey sky flies the evil Duchess Raven Waves. The character of Raven Waves sings, "I want to take over the kingdom and cut a lock of Lady Lovely Locks' hair." Meanwhile, Silky Pup has gotten wet, and Lady Lovely Locks brings her indoors to care for her.

Audio Excerpt #5: Taking Care of Business

Song: "Taking Care of Business"

All: [singing] Taking care of business . . . washing the clothes . . . feeding the pup . . . taking care of business.



The call and response nature of the music allows Joey to lead. He corrects the therapists, insisting we repeat his lyrics accurately. He responds to the rock-like style with pleasure, moving energetically as the music is extended.

Lady Lovely Locks hears Raven Wave's evil laugh and asks the Pixie Tails to help her defend the kingdom. During this time, Silky Pup has run out again and gotten muddy. Lady Lovely Locks gets angry and punishes her. There is a final confrontation between Raven Waves and Lady Lovely Locks and a battle ensues. The Evil Duchess is driven out, and there follows a great feast. The next morning Lady Lovely Locks says farewell to her friends, boards the train, and returns to the city.

Audio Excerpt #6: Goodbye, Farewell

Song: "Goodbye, Farewell"

All: [singing] Goodbye, farewell, and thank you, Silky Pup, thank you, Pixie Tails.

M: And she sang that the next day when she was about to get on the train?

J: Yeah. Then what?



The music is tender, almost melancholic, without a strong pulse or drive. The therapist waits for Joey to respond before completing the phrase. It is often difficult for him to live in this lyrical musical expression, difficult for him to be calm enough to let it enter him.

Clinical Process

Joey had an easy rapport with both therapists from the beginning; his passion for music and ongoing relationship with Alan no doubt helped to create this level of relatedness and trust.

The structural component of a mixed gender team had its own therapeutic benefit. It created the possibility for corrective emotional experiences encompassing both limit setting and nurturing within the traditional model of an intact family unit. It was an opportunity for Joey to experience reliable, predictable, and safe adult figures.

Once the events of his adaptation of the story were known to us, Joey wanted Michele to tell the story. He was quite vigilant in monitoring the narration, correcting her if something was changed inadvertently. Despite this, by becoming the storyteller, Michele could dramatize significant aspects of the content and control the pace of the action. This change in roles increased the possibility for Joey to become more active musically.

Clinical Considerations

Allowing Joey to bring the same story to his sessions each week gave him a sense of control—an important approach particularly when working with someone with a traumatized past. In some ways he displayed classic symptoms of an abused child—particularly in his diminished depth of feeling. We saw his compulsion to retell the fantasy each week as an attempt to master unpleasant experiences through symbolic play, and we felt it necessary to address this material.

We met with Joey's drama therapist who was frustrated that he used the story in an isolating way in her sessions. She acknowledged that music seemed to open up the story's therapeutic possibilities. As Alan improvised music to represent the characters and themes, an emotional, interactional element was introduced that worked powerfully against Joey's chronic tendency to isolate himself.

We considered the symbolic significance of the characters and plot of Joey's story. However, we did not make concrete interpretations or attempt to bring interpretations to his conscious awareness.

Our decision was influenced by the fact that, despite his age, Joey functioned on an earlier developmental level, both emotionally and intellectually. Child psychiatrist Dr. Richard Gardner (1975) supports the necessity of weaving therapy into the activity of play: "The child does not come to therapy motivated to gain insight into the psychodynamic processes which underlie his problems" (p. 47). The therapeutic *experience*—in this case, the musical interplay—became the substance of Joey's therapy and motivated him to become engaged with us.

By accepting his need to bring us the story of Lady Lovely Locks, and through a musical elaboration of it, we had built a relationship with Joey that then allowed for the next stage in the work.

2. Alteration of the Story

Our continuing use of the story raised many clinical questions. We had become concerned that Joey was using the Lady Lovely Locks dolls in a ritualistic, isolating fashion at home. Joey's mother urged his drama therapist to keep the dolls in her office to limit

his contact with them, which she did. We were faced with a predicament. Could we continue to use the story without reinforcing Joey's seemingly obsessive behavior about it? Should we refuse to dramatize this same story week after week, month after month? Was it enough to reflect and support the content of the story? Would the effects of the therapy be enhanced if we adapted and changed the content? In addition, how should we handle delicate material from his past?

We struggled over how directive we should be and examined our own countertransferential feelings of boredom in repeating the same story each week. Was it Joey's clinical need or our personal preference to make changes? We understood Joey's need to repeat the story as a way to feel safe. But what about the habitual nature in which he would insist that we repeat every component of the story in exactly the same way each week—down to the smallest detail?

The fact that we were two therapists working together helped us deal with these issues. We could explore personal reactions, discuss our concerns, and then take clinical direction. Over time, we had learned to trust each other in taking independent action in the sessions.

During the period of treatment beginning in December, we considered making small changes in the content of the story. We had already begun making musical changes within the now-familiar songs, such as intentionally slowing a tempo, and encouraging Joey to respond by controlling his drum beating. Our cue that Joey was ready for change in the actual story came when we saw him begin making small changes *himself*. He danced, varied the order of the story, and took more initiative. We then knew *we* could begin varying certain elements more actively.

In mid-December, during the ninth session, we wrote out the train route on the blackboard, leaving a question mark next to one of the stops. Joey rejected our attempt to "travel" to a new place.

At this time, Joey was beginning to sing more assertively as we encouraged greater vocal freedom. In the tenth session, Alan introduced a new component to the train ride, playfully modeling a more active vocal posture (complete with "New York" dialect) by calling out the train stops. Joey made a change by calling them out on his own in an uncharacteristically dynamic way, while

enjoying Alan and identifying with him. Later, *he* led us back to the song.

Audio Excerpt #7: Patterson Village Variation

- J,A: By train.
 J: White Plains!
 A: White Plains! All off for White Plains!
 J: Brew . . . No, Mt. Kisco!
 A: Mt. Kisco, Mt. Kisco! All off!
 J: Brewster!
 A: Brewster! Hey, buddy, you better wake up. This is your stop for Brewster.
 J: What about Dykman? Dykman, everybody off for Dykman!
 A: Everybody off for Dykman! Everybody off for Dykman!
 J: Towners, everybody off for Towners!
 A: Where? Towners?
 J: Yeah, we're there!
 M: We're there.
Song: "Going Up to Patterson Village" (Variation/Extension)
 J: [singing] Going up to Patterson Village [laughs] by train
 . . .

We continued cautiously, trying different ways of varying the story's content. By the twelfth session, the flexibility and pleasure Joey was showing led us to experiment with changing the words of a song. His immediate response to any previous change had always been, "No!" This time, when we changed the lyrics, we could tell that Joey was enjoying the playful intrusion of new ideas, even though he ultimately rejected the new lyrics.

Audio Excerpt #8: Taking Care of Business Variation

- Song: "Taking Care of Business" (Variation)*
 J: [singing] Drying the clothes, washing the pup . . .
 A: *Walking the pup.*
 J: No, *washing!*
 A: I thought you said "walking."
 J: Drying the clothes, washing the pup . . .
 M: You can change the words if you want, Joey.
 J: No.

- A: Yeah, let's change the words!
 J: No!
 M: What else was she doing?
 A: Dancing with the pup!
 J: No, taking care of business . . .
 A: And, she was jumping up and down with the pup!
 J: No! [laughing]

In the thirteenth session, we had the train breaking down, causing Lady Lovely Locks back to travel to New York City! He entered immediately into this variation.

**Audio Excerpt #9:
 Patterson Village Train Breakdown**

Song: "Going Up to Patterson Village" (Variation)

- J: Passing Dutchess County . . .
 M: Listen to the train. What's going on with the train?
 J: What?
 M: I think there's trouble on the train.
 J: Yeah.
 M: What could it be?
 J: The engine probably . . .
 M: The engine is breaking down.
 A: Ladies and gentlemen, we got a little temporary engine problem. You'll have to get off right here.
 J: Yeah. And, what does Lady Lovely Locks do?
 M: Well, what do you think she did?

Interestingly, Joey reminded us of this change in the story in the following session, confirming again that he was ready to accept variations.

In late March, during Session 21, Joey changed the story so that the Lady Lovely Locks character *stayed* in Patterson Village, where she was taken on a tour by Joey. (In this way, his fantasy character visited his past). This spontaneous change was facilitated by Michele's gentle questioning. Joey was intrigued and ultimately made the decision to vary the plot. He was beginning to use his imagination more freely in suggesting what the characters might do together. The improvised music supported the event—at first, with a quiet, open quality and later, with a more assertive declaration.

Audio Excerpt #10: I Want to Stay

M: Lady Lovely Locks hears it [the train], and she has to say goodbye to Joey. But Joey is not so sure he wants to let her leave.

J: Why not?

M: He's sad to see her go.

J: Why does Lady Lovely Locks have to get back to the kingdom?

M: That's a good question. I don't know. Maybe she should stay in Patterson.

J: What do you think?

M: What do you think?

J: What do you think? I think she should stay in Patterson.

M: I think it's a sunny day in Patterson, and she wants to stay there.

J: But . . .

M: But? Joey knows a lot of places to take her.

J: Yes, and . . .

M: And . . . she lets the train leave.

Song: *"I Want to Stay with Joey"*

A: [singing] I want to stay with Joey. I want to stay in Patterson.

J: Yeah!

A,M: [singing] I want to stay with Joey.

J: Yeah, I want to stay with Patterson [drumming].

A: [singing] In Patterson . . .

J: [singing] In Patterson . . .

A: [singing] In Patterson . . .

J: [singing] In Patterson . . .

A,J: [singing] In Patterson . . .

All: [singing] I want to stay in Patterson [Joey on cymbal]

A: [singing] With Joey . . . on a sunny day . . . I want to stay . . . [Joey sits quietly]

M: So, Joey is thinking about where he should show his friend. What should he show her about Patterson?

J: What about the park with the windmill?

M: The windmill?

J: Yes.

M: That would be pretty.

J: Yes.

M: So, he tells her about it?

J: He takes her there.

M: He takes her right there.



The melody supports the declaration of the lyric by leaping past the tonic to the major second tone. The same tone helps to build the harmony of a major ninth chord. This adds a feeling of musical warmth and invitation. Michele responds to the song idea by adding the cymbal that emphasizes the word “stay” and pulls Joey into the experience by having him play it.

In January, we were notified of a mutual decision between Joey’s mother and his drama therapist to eliminate the Lady Lovely Locks dolls from his life. We decided that our use of the story could serve as an important transition for Joey until he was emotionally ready to let go of the dolls.

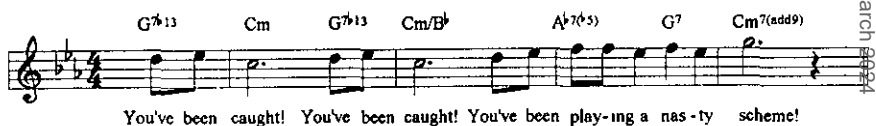
Unexpected Stop

By the end of February, Session 17, the rapport between us was powerful enough to withstand some playful confrontation. Joey was busy checking on details of Michele’s narration when Alan intervened, pointing out Joey’s challenging behavior during a suspension of the story. In response, Joey declared, “I made a scheme.” He seemed to enjoy Alan’s direct yet playful admonishment. The telling of the story became secondary to this unexpected interaction; a genuine exchange in which an aspect of Joey’s own self came to the forefront.

Audio Excerpt #11: Scheme

- M: Lady Lovely Locks picked up the pup and brought her inside and put her in the sink to wash her off again. She was still really angry.
- J: Yeah. And what did he hear downstairs?
- M: She heard the . . .
- J: I don’t know.
- M: Say it.
- J: You say it.
- M: The dryer goes off.

- J: No! The washer
 M: The washer. [everyone laughs]
 A: You know what? Whatever Michele says, you say the opposite.
 J: Yeah.
 A: You always like to trick her. I noticed that. Yes. Right?
 J: Yeah.
 A: Whatever Michele says, you say it's the other thing. Right? You're playing a trick on her.
 J: [Laughing] Right!
 A: That's right. I knew it! I knew it!
 J: Oh, no!
 A: I found out.
 J: [Gets up, laughing and running around the room] I'm playing a nasty scheme.
Song: "You've Been Playing a Trick"
 A: [singing] You've been playing a trick. A big nasty trick. You've been playing a joke on Michele.
 J: I played a scheme.
 A: [singing] You've got a scheme. Whatever she says, you say the opposite.
 M: If I say no, you say . . .
 M, J: Yes!
 M: If I say yes . . .
 J: You'll say no! If you say dryer, then I say . . .
 M: Wet!
 J: No, dryer!
 M: Dryer. Then you say washer.
 J: [With glee, running around room] Oh, no!
 A: You've been caught! You've been caught! You've been playing a nasty scheme on Michele.
 A,M: [singing] You've been caught! You've been playing a nasty scheme!



At first, there is a driving, rhythmic repetition of dissonant chords that celebrates Joey's mischievous assertiveness. The tension in the harmony adds to the excitement, encouraging Joey to bring all parts of himself more directly into the relationship.

Focus on a Theme

Concurrent with the new directions and interventions described above, Joey began to elaborate on the section of the story where Silky Pup was chastised by Lady Lovely Locks. Our sense was that this was connected to his family history. He included in the Silky Pup scene the actual location of the sexual abuse and the devices used to threaten him.

As early as the fourth session, Joey had created a different scene where the dog had run out and gotten dirty again. Lady Lovely Locks had gotten angry, yelled at the pup, and then taken her inside to clean her up. The yelling, in subsequent sessions, had developed into spanking and had come to include carrying the dog down to the basement in an angry gesture—once, even throwing her in the sink.

Although it was not clear whether or not Joey's grandfather physically abused him, threats were made to hurt him. Direct references to the sexual abuse never came up in Joey's story. However, his theme of feeling dirty was consistent with feelings of other children who have been abused.

Joey had surprised us in mid-December by asking to go through the scene "without any music." He had then acted out scolding and spanking the dog, during a stark contrasting silence. Joey seemed to enjoy identifying with the aggressor in his role of disciplinarian.

We were respectful of his unconscious need to elaborate on this material. Within the therapeutic musical relationship that had developed, he was able to re-experience the past as his own creation, to be both victim and aggressor, and to be master of all that occurred. He could thereby explore the material in the here-and-now. Given his developmental level of functioning and his resistance to direct verbal exploration, we did not question him about actual events in his life. We did not want to take him out of the powerful metaphor of the story.

In the sessions that followed, we encouraged Joey to bring himself fully into this Silky Pup scene, and we emphasized the emotional content with music. During several sessions, Joey played the drums aggressively during this scene. The music functioned to connect his affect to the content, as the story unfolded.

In mid-March, during Session 19, Joey visited Lady Lovely Lock's castle in the story. He told us that Silky Pup was crying. As this was a spontaneous change, Alan decided to investigate a different aspect of the scene. He took on the role of the dog in order to amplify the feelings suggested by Joey. Alan sang, "Don't leave me, I'm sad and lonely." Joey quietly said, "Yes," in acknowledgment of the feeling expressed in Alan's words and music. Joey then sang the part of the dog in a tender way. Later, he sang the role of Joey, a visitor to the Kingdom that day who, at first ignored Silky Pup and then showed more understanding and tolerance.

In the musical dialogue that occurred, time itself, in a sense, became suspended by the repetition of the ostinato minor chord pattern under a repeated melody. Nordoff (cited in Robbins & Forinash, 1991) describes this musical phenomenon: By "... taking the music out of physical time ... through repetition [one can provide] ... a sense of duration [which] ... becomes a kind of musical substance for the child" (p. 49). Sensing Joey's unusually reflective, inward mood, we stepped aside from the telling of the story as he had come to know it. This gave him the personal time to delve deeply into his thoughts and feelings.

Audio Excerpt #12: Don't Leave Me

J: Lady Lovely Locks. "Boy, is that puppy," she says as she turned to walk out, "You'll get no dinner tonight." Silky Pup is crying.

M: Does Joey see her crying?

J: Who?

M: Silky Pup.

J: Yeah.

M: What does he do?

J: He just ignores her and goes down to the basement with the princess.

A: And Silky Pup sings a song to Joey.

J: What?

Song: "Don't Leave Me. I'm Sad and Lonely."

J: Yes ... [singing] Sad and ... She barks it, though ... goes "woof, woof." [singing] "I'm very sad and woof-woof. I went out in the rain, woof-woof." So ...

A: What did Joey say back?

J: [singing] I'm sorry, little Silky Pup, but you're being punished because you went out in the rain ... Yeah ... All right ... Now what?



The music creates a sense of poignancy. There is a change in register, and the pedal serves to sustain tones outside of the minor triad, creating dissonances. Joey grasps the musical structure and sings phrases in a sensitive way. The harmony changes to emphasize his tender expression. The emotional tone of the music seems to reflect accurately the sadness he describes.

Joey's mood, however, was soon dispelled when he asked, "Now what?," his habitual response to moments of transition, quiet, or tender emotion.

3. A New Story

Joey's flexibility and spontaneity were growing. By April, we sensed that he was losing interest in the Lady Lovely Locks story. The narrative scenes did not seem to carry as much emotional weight for him as in the past. The train ride, which had always been an exciting feature, seemed to become more important than the story itself.

We also acknowledged to each other that we felt limited in using this fantasy. The themes embodied in the tale had some of the traditional elements of good and evil, tension and resolution. However, we felt there were elements lacking, elements that are present in the classical myths as described by Joseph Campbell (1949) and others.

The basic content of a myth "... is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return ..." (Campbell, 1949, p. 30). The hero departs from his home territory, confronts danger, has an encounter that changes him in some way, is successful, and returns to his place of origin to use his new self with the power to help others. We considered incorporating some of these elements into the next phase of the therapy.

It had been four weeks since the Lady Lovely Locks dolls had been banned from Joey's life, and he seemed ready to move on. After much discussion and examination of the videotapes of the sessions, we decided to offer a different story, with Joey's creative input. It seemed to be the logical progression—to help him give up what had become habitual and to challenge him in a new way.

In mid-May, during Session 23, we brought in many new instruments. Alan made the choice clear: Joey could improvise with him or Joey could begin a new story. We insisted that this story come from him—not from TV or video. He responded to our suggestion at first by playing the drum in a playfully resistant manner, saying "I'm not going there [the kingdom] today."

Audio Excerpt # 13: A New Place

- A: We'll go to a different place with different people.
 J: Not the kingdom of Lovely Locks.
 A: Not the Kingdom of Lovely Locks.
 J: Not Patterson.
 A: Not Patterson.
 J: Why not?
 A: It's a new place.
 J: Oh, no. [with drum, singing] I'm not going there today.
 A: [singing] But you're going somewhere new.
 J: [singing] I'm not going there today.
 A: [singing] But you're going somewhere new.
 J: I'm not going somewhere today, but I'm going somewhere new. [strumming harp]
 A: [singing] A new place. [Spoken to Joey] Do it slow.
 J: A new place.
 All: A new place.
 J: Not the kingdom. Not the kingdom.
 A: [singing] A new place.
 M: [singing] Not the kingdom.
 J: Not Patterson.
 A,M: [singing] Not Patterson.
 M: [singing] Not today.
 J: Why not?
 A: [singing] A new place.
 J: Why don't we put Lady Lovely Locks in the story?
 M: [singing] A new place.

- J: [singing] We can't have Lady Lovely Locks.
 M: We'll save her for another day.
 J: Why not today?
 A: [singing] A new place. A new place for Joey today.
 J: Yeah.
 A: [singing] A new place. A new place for Joey today.
 J: A . . . [mumbles]
 A: Say it out loud.
 J: Nothing.
 M: Nothing?
 J: Oh, rats!
 A: [singing] A new place for Joey!
 J: Oh no, not the old place.
 A: [singing] It's not the old familiar place.
 A,M: [singing] A new place for Joey.
 J: I want to play the new instruments instead today.
 A: [singing] With new instruments today.

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The first staff is in 4/4 time and contains the lyrics "But you're go-ing some-where new! But you're go-ing some-where new!". The second staff contains the lyrics "A new place! A new place for Jo-ey". The third staff contains the lyrics "It's not the old fam-il-iar place". Chord symbols are written above the notes: F# (first staff), G#m7/F# (second staff), E/F# (second staff), F#6/9 (second staff), E/F# (third staff), G#m (third staff), C#sus4 (third staff), and C# (third staff). A final chord symbol, F#maj7(b9), is written above the end of the first staff.

As Alan improvises an open melody in the mixolydian mode, its ascending line draws Joey in, beckoning him to come along. As the word "new" is repeated, the music rises to a new harmonic center, creating a sense of movement. Alan's repetition of the phrase and Joey's interest in strumming a small harp help him eventually accept this musical invitation. Joey's brief outburst of regret, "Oh, rats!" is answered with a strong, chordal contrasting phrase, urging him to accept this change, and he sings, "Oh, no, not the old place."

Although Joey did resist the new experience, there seemed to be a feeling of anticipation for all of us as we sang the words. Once involved, Joey entered into the creative process and invented a new setting—the jungle—and several characters in this session. The story itself, however, was not completely spelled out. We had an opportunity to include what we considered to be important thematic material, introducing ideas for a story that Joey could help us shape.

We wanted the story, as it developed, to be relevant to Joey's life. We especially wanted to attribute characteristics to a male protagonist that were important for him to have: patience, focus, strength, and a willingness to venture out.

Joey's new story began to emerge:

A young man expresses his concern to the mayor regarding the failing health of the animals in his town.

Audio Excerpt #14: They're Really Sick

Song: "Really Sick"

J: The animals in the zoo . . .

All: [singing] . . . are really sick.

A: [singing] One has a cold, one has the flu, one has a bellyache . . .

J: [improvising] What are we to do?

A,M: What are we to do?

All: [singing] They're really sick.

J: Can I please say a verse?

A: Of course!

J: [singing] One has a high fever, one has sore feet, one has a sore tummy.

A: I've got one! [singing] And one has a sore throat.

All: [singing] They're really sick.



Tones outside of the expected tonality accentuate the theme of illness, while the phrasing in the B section allows for Joey's spontaneous responses. He creates a clear melodic line that displays his musical sensitivity: His melody leads us directly to the dominant chord.

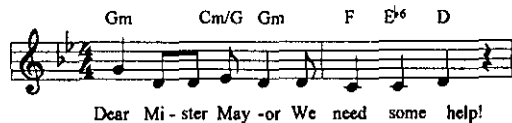
Audio Excerpt #15: Dear Mr. Mayor

J: Remember this part? Listen to this! [singing] Dear Mr. Mayor, we need your help! Have you noticed that the animals are not feeling well? Help us!

Song: "Dear Mr. Mayor"

A: [singing] Yours truly . . .

J: [singing] Bob.

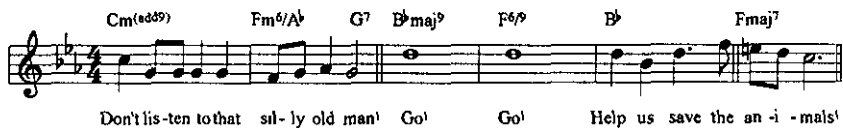


Joey's vocal presence is striking: He sings strongly with great drama. His involvement is due in part to his having created this story idea and lyrics.

A wise man instructs the young man to go to the jungle to find a cure; the townspeople ridicule the idea.

Audio Excerpt #16: Don't Listen/Go!

Song: "Don't Listen to that Silly Old Man/Go! Help Us Heal the Animals"



Musical contrasts—in tonality, articulation, and melodic rhythm—accentuate the dramatic conflict in the story. Joey's orchestration with cymbal, and the increase in dynamics, help to emphasize and validate taking action.

The young man then sets out on a treacherous journey by mule to the jungle.

Audio Excerpt #17: Mule Music

A: Bye-bye. Please find an answer. Please help our animals.

M: Let's play [temple blocks] together.
"Mule Music"

M: He gets on the mule and, boy, does that mule move slowly!

J: [Plays temple blocks]

M: It's not as fast as a train. It's not as fast as a plane. But the mule is very strong, and he can carry Bob and everything that he has in his pack.



The repeating half-steps in the bass always lead back to the same tone, helping to create in the music a sense of the hero's struggle. Since sustaining a slow tempo is difficult for Joey, Michele provides a way to slow the music down via the "mule." Within the context of the story, Joey is much more tolerant of "traveling" slowly.

The young man arrives at his destination where he meets Zelda, the queen of the jungle.

Audio Excerpt #18: We're in the Jungle

M: He walks right into the jungle.

Song: "We're in the Jungle"

M: Stand up, Joey.

A,M: [singing] Watch out for the lions. Watch out for the tigers.



The repeating ostinato and melodic phrase, as well as chromatic tones, lend a sense of excitement and foreboding to the "arrival" in an exotic place. We encourage Joey to stand and play the conga; he does so with strength.

The queen of the jungle instructs the young man to find a magic tree. He must create a flute from its branch and return to his town to play the flute for the animals. He befriends a lion cub who helps him find his way. The many challenges he meets force him to rise above his limitations and use skills he does not know he possesses. He also proves himself by playing a guitar. Upon his return, he heals the animals. The lion cub is reunited with his parents who live in the zoo.

Audio Excerpt #19: Let Me In

J: Well, we haven't gotten to the part where Tommy [lion cub] has found his family.

M: That's true. Does Bobby see the zoo?

J: Yeah.

M: What happens?

J: He blows his whistle. And the animals start to come alive—they're healed. Then Tom notices something.

M: What does he notice?

J: He sees his family. So he says to Bob . . .

M: What does he say?

J: "Help me get in there to see my family."

M: He says, "Let me in"?

J: Yeah.

Song: "Let Me In"

All: [singing] Let me in. Can't you see? They're my family.

A: [singing] I'm so glad to see you. I was lost.

J: Yeah.

J: Let me in. Can't you see? You're my family.



The gentle plea, "Let me in," is emphasized by a repeated melody note. The bass pedal tone A (tonic) creates stability and a sense of "being home." Joey sings the melody lyrically and sustains his focus in the tender mood.

The young man is hailed as the town's hero by the mayor and townspeople.

Joey initiates the idea of a parade for the final section of the story. He plays the drum with strength in musical celebration of the hero's success.

Clinical Process

Within the jungle story, Joey took a more active role in the creative collaboration. We asked him to choose the setting and names of characters, and he helped develop lyrics and melodic ideas. In this way, Joey achieved a sense of ownership.

In order to focus on various themes we considered important, Alan composed some additional songs outside of the session. The music contained melodic phrases and harmonic changes that were unpredictable, posing a challenge to Joey's musical intelligence.

Joey's enthusiasm grew each week as the story developed, and he began to identify with its hero. It is important to note that Joey added to our story the character of the lion cub, later deciding that the cub should return from the jungle to the zoo to be reunited with his parents. The cub's wish for an intact family poignantly paralleled Joey's.

He requested that the jungle story be enacted each week, and he conveyed a genuine sense of wonder as the story unfolded. He did not insist on exact repetitions, as he had with the Lady Lovely Locks' story, and was more open to change. New songs and variations were created in each session, often by Joey, even as the basic plot remained the same.

At times, Joey would spontaneously act out a scene, such as climbing an imaginary tree. He took musical risks, such as learning a simple chord on the guitar and playing it with enthusiasm. He also showed an ability not only to tolerate calmer, more introspective music, but also to sing thoughtful songs in a connected, musical way. Although there were times when he would request the Lady Lovely Locks fantasy, he could be redirected easily.

Closure

Joey's music therapy sessions ended before the summer. The following September when we started seeing him again, he walked in singing, "Dear Mr. Mayor." As the weeks passed, the jungle story became secondary to spontaneous songs about Joey's life at home and in school. He began to talk about his music therapy group, wanting to sing songs from that setting. At this point, he seemed more invested in group than in individual treatment, and we considered when we might terminate our therapy with him. It was a difficult decision for us. In December, we asked him what his reaction was to the idea. Joey stated that he was ready and decided that the date for his final individual session would be one month later.

Overview and Conclusion

Throughout Joey's course of treatment, musical fantasy was the context through which we worked to address his needs. Initially, by accepting and elaborating upon his story musically, we hoped to transform Joey's internal world of imagination into an externally shared musical experience. In the second phase of treatment, it became clinically warranted for us to move from a less directive stance to a more directive one in which we offered a series of changes—challenges that Joey could not bring to himself. He began to show a new spontaneity and flexibility that led us to the third phase of therapy in which Joey could accept and, in fact, embrace a completely new musical story—one that gave him the opportunity to experience himself in a new way. Mills and Crowley (1974) write,

They [children] do not try to figure out the story being presented; they simply enter into it with the full force of their imaginative powers. These imaginative powers are the critical substance of change and healing, once they are activated. The metaphor can act as flame to candle, igniting the child's imagination to its brightest valence of strength, self-knowledge, and transformation. (p. xxi)

As music therapists, we found that combining clinically directed music with fantasy allowed us to enrich Joey's story affectively and interact with him in the creative drama. Through music therapy, Joey eventually was able to approach these stories not as fixed ideas, but as potential activators. The process moved him from a position of rigidity and isolation to one of creative engagement with others.

It was significant that Joey felt safe enough to engage in the creative process; it became a means of captivating him and pulling him into the moment completely. In one of his later sessions, Joey spontaneously asked Alan how Alan's life was and then shared that he felt good about his own life—by finishing the Lady Lovely Locks tale and moving on to the jungle story.

While Joey's disabilities led him to adapting a rigid stance in life—being stuck, in a sense, in physical time—his ability to grow and live in emotional and creative time in music was a great gain.

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