Dear Music Therapy:

When I was asked to contribute to your final volume, I experienced an overwhelming rush of emotions and of memories that are vividly etched in my mind. The pending sense of personal and professional loss that I have felt over this past year struck the very core of my Being with renewed force: It's an undeniable reality that soon the American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) and you, its literary arm since 1981, will no longer exist. I pondered, "How can I best address these profound feelings in writing? How can I do justice to the acknowledgment of what you and AAMT have meant to me and the impact you have had on the world of music therapy?" Somehow, taking the liberty—the poetic license—to personalize you has provided a fully-human mode of voicing these emotions and thoughts whirling about in my mind-body-soul. It has helped me bring closure to an extraordinary phase of my journey—my Tao—as a music therapist.

One of the original members of our association, I realize, with a startling combination of sadness and joyousness, that my journey as a music therapist actually parallels the life of AAMT and its predecessor, the Urban Federation of Music Therapy. The fact that AAMT is so inextricably woven into the fabric of my life and has so indelibly influenced my evolution, gives me pause to reflect on the very special place it has in my heart. Retracing this historic voyage catapults me back to 1973 when, as a candidate for the Masters Degree in New York University Music Therapy Program, I joined the Urban Federation of Music Therapy. A year later, I gave a presentation (my first on music therapy) at the conference in New York City, at which the change of name to American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) was proposed and voted in enthusiastically and unanimously.

A fervent proponent of AAMT's humanistic philosophical and psychological orientation, my involvement and allegiance over the years has been undeviating. With a staunch commitment to our common ideal and purpose, I have served on the Board of Directors, on the Committee
for Education and Training, as your editor, and as a regular presenter at national AAMT conferences.

Some highlights, some "firsts" that keep surfacing—that combine my connection with you, Music Therapy, and, of course, with AAMT—fall magically into the theme of this letter to you and add a significance that further churns up my mixed emotions: (1) in 1974, my beginning as a presenter on music therapy at an AAMT conference ("Developing Communication with the Autistic Child through Music Therapy"); (2) in 1980, participation in the exciting meeting at which you—Music Therapy—were "born" and named; (3) in 1981, publication of the article that I was asked to write for your very first issue, which happily marks my part in your beginning and sadly reminds me of your ending; and (4) in 1995, being the recipient of the first AAMT Lifetime Achievement Award at the conference when the unification of the two national associations—AAMT and NAMT—was a prime issue.

Implicit in this evolving stage of our profession was the fact that there would be a final volume of the journal in which we of AAMT have taken such pride and gratification. To have contributed to your first volume—the articles, "A Continuum of Awareness: Music Therapy with the Developmentally Handicapped,"* (1981,1(1), 17-23) and "Essential Competencies for the Practice of Music Therapy,“ (1981,1(1), 43-49), coauthored with Kenneth Bruscia Ph.D, CMT and Barbara Hesser, CMT and, to have been intimately involved in your evolution as one of your editor has given me a tremendous sense of fulfillment. At this juncture, with firm intention to continue engaging in the new developments, my thoughts turn to the future possibilities of the integration of your quality into the new—as yet unnamed—AMTA journal.

As a champion of humanistic philosophy and psychology,** the contents of your articles have consistently demonstrated the art and science of the practice of our treatment modality. Within that perspective, their nature, substance, human quality, and points of view have substantially enhanced overall understanding, specific knowledge, and awareness of

*A Continuum of Awareness is the context of my approach to the practice of music therapy created early on as a member of AAMT and graduate of the New York University Music Therapy Program. It is based in the psychology and philosophy of such humanistic psychotherapists as Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Clark Moustakas.

**Humanistic psychology is, in the words of Clark Moustakas, one of the founders of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, "a psychology that... recognize[s] the person, as a whole being, with potentials for life and growth that... value the internal frame of reference and self-experience as fundamental and valid ways to knowledge and truth.” (1995, p. 10)
the efficacy of centering on the creative process rather than on a product or statistical result; on the qualitative rather than quantitative aspect of music therapy. You have been inspiring and inspirational for the seasoned practitioner, the neophyte music therapist and the music therapy student.

Reminiscing and reviewing in more detail, my commitment to your position as a vital force in influencing the broad scope of music therapy methodology came to a high point upon becoming your editor for the years of 1988 and 1989. Having engaged in a goodly number of discussions with Barbara Hesser, Coordinator of the New York University Music Therapy Program, about exploring possibilities for enhancing your dynamic and extensive influence (her perceptive guidance and assessment of your progress and quality has been ongoing), I conceived the idea of creating a forum that would evolve into an everlasting living dialogue for communicating and exchanging views with key figures in the field of music as well as in allied professions. This propelled me to solicit articles that would encompass the potential of our field and its expansive role in the world-at-large. With the concurrence of AAMT, I thought, as founder-director, to make the vision and concept of Music Therapists for Peace (MTP) a dominant theme. To that end, I sent out an invitational letter to a wide variety of possible authors.

The response was not only demonstrated in the articles and statements by such world-renowned figures as pianist/music educator, Lorin Hollander, and the Sufi leader of the West, Pir Vilayat Kahn, but also by internationally recognized music therapy educators such as Even Ruud, Mary Priestley, Barbara Hesser, and Dr. Tadafumi Yamamatsu. Expressions of validation came from a broad spectrum of supporters. To name a few: musicians Itzak Perlman and Paul Winter; author/educator Jean Houston; psychologist Rollo May; anthropologist Ashley Montagu; and former Assistant General of the United Nations/current Chancellor of the University for Peace in Costa Rica, Dr. Robert Muller.

This support was most heartening. As I stated in the Opening Notes of your 1989 Vol. 8, No.1, “... in accordance with the precept to have the courage to create ... we need to have the courage to move into new and untried paths.” And, dear Journal, this excerpt from a letter sent to me by Dr. Clive Robbins, is empowering—revitalizing—inspiring in its acknowledgement that your highest purpose is coming to fruition:

Congratulations on Music Therapy, Vol. 7, No. 1. Thank you

*Music Therapists for Peace, Inc., founded in March of 1988, at a national AAMT conference, is a worldwide network of music therapists who contribute to peace on all levels of human existence and as “ambassadors of peace through music therapy,” go beyond the treatment room. A main project is Students Against Violence Everywhere—S.A.V.E.—through Music Therapy.
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.

And now, moving toward the 21st millennium as a newly organized whole, it is of utmost importance to preserve the essence of the commitment and intention that you, dear Music Therapy, have fulfilled in being the humanistically oriented forum for our profession—that this essence will continue to have a penetrating, compelling, fundamental impact on our future.

Yes, your spirit is indomitable, and we who have been so passionately dedicated to your existence as a lifeline of AAMT affirm that although this may be an ending to your separate existence, your spirit will live on in the AMTA journal soon to have its beginning.

The prophetic and inspirational words of the great poet Pablo Neruda might well have been dedicated to us music therapists as we assume our new-sprung identity:

\[\ldots we\ are\ approaching\ a\ great\ common\ tenderness.\ldots\]
\[We\ shall\ all\ understand\ one\ another.\ We\ shall\ advance\ together.\]
(1986 [March])

With ever-loving remembrances of you, Music Therapy, I utter a tearful “Good-bye” upon your ending.

Notes and Thoughts on New Beginnings

The world is fast becoming a global village as perceived by the cultural historian, Marshal McLuhan. Far-distant people are able to be in instantaneous contact with each other. We fly across vast oceans in a few hours. In our everyday conversations we casually talk about this or that happening on the planet. Surfing Internet is a commonplace activity in our homes. It would seem that never before in the annals of the human race has there been such a need for the basic essences of humanness. Such an essence is music, a universal means of human expression and one of humankind’s most ancient forms of healing and communication. In this tradition it follows that a modern therapy, whose therapeutic tool is music, is a natural pathway to health—a
prime mover for wellness and well-being. And, as a champion of AAMT’s quintessential philosophical and psychological orientation, it is my intention to continue to help fulfill the deepest and broadest implications of our work. I envision all music therapists calling for collective and collaborative thinking and action to:

- Eliminate divisiveness by fulfilling the inherent purpose and nature of music therapy;
- Explore the untold possibilities for expansion of our field and ourselves as music therapists;
- Have music therapy contribute to the health and well-being of everyone, everywhere on planet Earth, especially the children.

Now that we are coming together as a unified whole—as the American Association for Music Therapy (AMTA)—we have, more than ever, the awe-inspiring responsibility and opportunity to enlarge our horizons, to effect an impact that goes far beyond the traditional treatment room, to expand our use of the power of music in ways that have not as yet been imagined.

With the intention and courage to create new pathways, we music therapists can fulfill our unique mission in the universal scheme.

References


Edith Hillman Boxill, CMT, internationally renowned as clinician and founder of Music Therapists for Peace, Inc., is an adjunct professor in the New York University Music Therapy Program. She has served on the board of directors of the American Association for Music Therapy. An archive of her music therapy sessions and a scholarship in her name have been established at N.Y.U. Author of professional articles and a monograph, "Music Therapy for Living," her book, Music Therapy for the Developmentally Disabled, is used worldwide as a basic text. She is currently working on a book, The Miracle of Music Therapy, due for publication soon.