

Editorial

Welcome to the second themed issue of *Music and Arts in Action* (MAiA), an issue devoted to *Music and the arts in health promotion and wellness*. Throughout the world music and other art forms have long been used in diverse ways and settings to promote health and wellness, both within and beyond standard medical and healing practices. From the everyday use of music to mitigate stress and energise exercise routines to the extraordinary practice of therapeutic professionals, musical and other artistic engagements are increasingly becoming vibrant and dynamic aspects of everyday health strategies. This issue exemplifies the diversity of work in these areas and highlights innovative projects by researchers and practitioners across many arts and health communities.

In keeping with with the diverse growth of studies looking at health and various art forms, the articles in this issue cover a wide territory. They address questions regarding practice, theory and methodology in a range of health contexts from contraception to palliative care. The papers harness a wide array of qualitative methodologies employed across three continents in settings urban and rural. However disparate the specifics of the articles, the underlying common denominator is an interest in critically examining and articulating the role of 'musicking' and 'arting' in the well-being of people around the globe. In recent years the terms musicking and arting have reflected the theoretical re-orientations towards seeing the arts as praxis rather than as static objects, as vital activities to the lives and being of individuals and groups everywhere. Yet these are arguably some of the most abstract and intangible activities we can participate in. Music, for example, cannot be touched or seen; 'it' travels through walls and windows, yet our interactions with 'it' impacts our bodies, emotions and communities in deeply profound ways. The contributors in this issue of MAiA all speak to these dynamics of active engagement with music and artistic forms in health and well-being settings and activities across the lifecycle.

The issue begins with a guest editorial by Jill Sonke, Director of the Center for the Arts in Healthcare at the University of Florida and President Emeritus of the Society of the Arts in Healthcare. Sonke brings together her expert knowledge and practice in a variety of health and medical contexts to provide an overview of musical and artistic applications from a U.S. perspective. In comparing the medicalized practice of some art forms (*e.g.*, professional music therapy) with less standardized arts in healthcare initiatives (*e.g.*, artists in residence), Sonke reveals the diversity of approaches to the arts and healing in formal medical settings. She also demonstrates how these approaches have grown out of traditional healing rituals. In doing so, Sonke foregrounds the vital importance of the arts to individual and collective well-

being and the necessity to better understand the social, cultural and economic benefits of the increasing incorporation of music and the arts in health-care systems world wide.

In *Use of MP3 Players as a Coping Resource*, Marie Skånland explores how individuals mobilise music through personal listening technology to successfully cope with stressors in everyday urban life. Drawing on interviews with inhabitants of Oslo, Norway, Skånland adds to the growing literature on the agential affordances of mobile music technology in sonically configuring our inner states when mediating the external world. Skånland brings together work on the contemporary portability of music with work on the everyday experience of stress to illuminate music's uses in helping individuals configure their mental health.

Mariko Hara's article, *Music in Dementia Care: Increased Understanding through Mixed Research Methods*, turns to look at community-based activities. Drawing upon recent fieldwork in group singing as therapeutic activity in dementia care, Hara's article develops a mixed research methods approach to engage dementia patients in research settings, involving ethnography and semi-structured music elicitation interviews with patients, care-givers and therapists. Through this mixed methods approach she creates a successful strategy for research projects with dementia patients. Additionally, she challenges traditional frames of understanding music therapy. Hara contends that understanding the health benefits of music in these contexts requires an examination of the social aspects of music therapy, particularly as group singing events become a part of the social fabric of patient's lives with wide and multidimensional meanings.

Moving to Western Africa and the rich musical culture of Sierra Leone, Kate Bingley's *Bambeh's Song: Music, Women and Health in a Rural Community in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* highlights music's organising potentials in health promotion. Through song and dance Bambeh (a rural health professional) encourages community members to attend health promotion sessions, reinforces essential health messages and information, and leverages therapeutic communal benefits of making music together. Following Bambeh, Bingley develops a rich, situated tapestry of how music can be used to engage women in health awareness and education.

In *Restoring Identity and Bringing Balance through Navajo Healing Rituals*, Paul Moulton explores the role of music in the Diné healing ceremonies of the Native American Navajo tribe. Moulton's work with these ceremonies conceptualizes music as an active ingredient in grounding individual and group identity in time and place, personally and culturally at times when people feel most vulnerable. In doing so, Moulton demonstrates how ritual music making has positive psychological and emotional outcomes which re-establish social harmony at physical, emotional and metaphysical levels. The coming together of family and friends through music produces and re-affirms community and balance amidst the discontinuity of the changing modern social life of the Navajo.

As Giorgos Tsiris, *et al.* discuss, music is also an active resource for an area not typically associated with health promotion: death. In their article *Music and Arts in Health Promotion and Death Education: The St. Christopher's Schools Project*, they discuss the role of music and arts in palliative care and death education. Using the UK-based St. Christopher's hospice community arts programme, which involves collaborative arts projects between primary-secondary school children and terminally ill patients, the authors study the emergent outcomes for patients and students in dealing with terminal illness and death. Through collaborative art projects, such as felt-making and song writing, students developed more reflexive attitudes towards illness, death and dying. At the same time the arts-based interactions between students and hospice patients enlivened the mental well-being of patients by creating a comforting and purposeful space as they progressed through the end stages of life.

The final article engages the music and health field at a theoretical level. Lars Ole Bonde's *Health Musicking-Music Therapy or Music and Health? A Model, Empirical Examples and Personal Reflections* considers current debates around theory and empirical modes of inquiry and practice. Drawing upon the socio-philosophical work of Ken Wilber and its use by Gary Ansdell, Bonde creates a meta-theoretical reflection on the use of interpersonal or relational psychology and the dynamic relationship between theory and practice in music therapy. This ambitious framework bridges the opportunities and challenges of examining music and health in applied, clinical and everyday contexts.

In keeping with the mission of MAiA to explore the tacit uses of music and arts across social situations, these articles demonstrate the importance of grounding an understanding of music, arts and health promotion in discrete contexts of action. The dialogue between different contexts and levels of inquiry developed between these articles addresses concerns from the individual to the communal, the practical to the theoretical, and the physical to the emotional and indeed to the metaphysical. Throughout, the socially emerged capacities of the arts to influence and impact the body, mind and spirit are highlighted.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

MAiA is busy with upcoming themed and special issues. To continue offering themed issues of topical interest to our readers, while reducing the time to publication for other articles, future MAiA issues will feature both thematic and general article components. Following the current issue will be two special issues refereeing and documenting work presented at international conferences examining: *Music and migration*, and *Improvisation in performance*. Additionally, we invite you to view the call for papers for our next theme issue on *Musical and artistic mediations*. As always, MAiA maintains an open call for general submissions.

Additionally, you can now follow MAiA on [Twitter @musicartsaction](https://twitter.com/musicartsaction). Start following MAiA today to stay up-to-date through our tweets!

THE EDITORIAL TEAM, MUSIC AND ARTS IN ACTION

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