

The Importance of Listening - Just Listening....

Background

BMGIM

The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM) was developed by Helen Bonny in the latter part of the C20th. She described it as 'the purposeful use of prepared classical music by a guide or facilitator to evoke sensory and emotional responses to the listener. These responses, in the form of imagery, symbols, feelings, past and present life review, sensations, unfolding metaphors and transformative experiences, become the heart of the session' (Bonny 2001).

I myself am currently an advanced student on the GIM training. I am also a practising music therapist and the Course Leader of the MA Music Therapy at the University of South Wales, UK (<http://www.southwales.ac.uk/courses/ma-music-therapy/>).

While teaching, I have become aware of a growing interest in transpersonal/spiritual experience in many music therapy students, as well as evidence of the same in qualified practising music therapists (Tsisris 2016).

I began to wonder whether aspects of GIM philosophy and theory could be beneficial to trainee music therapists. This has led me to include music and imagery experiential elements in different teaching seminars.

Experiential group work with MA music therapy students and art psychotherapy students have been offered. Supervision groups and music therapy skills teaching have all been enriched by the addition of a variety of different ways of listening and responding to music, be they excerpts from Bonny programmes, or pieces selected by myself to work on certain aspects of practice.

Personal

A resource for strengthening personal identity

Trondalen (2014) has explored resource-orientated Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music as a creative health resource for professional musicians and music students. Hyun Bae (2010) has described her own personal journey through reflections on her GIM training.

Fellow GIM students have reflected:

"I can connect with deeper understandings of important issues in my current life - conscious and unconscious. I feel creative about possible solutions."

And:

"The training teaches me the importance of listening - just listening...."

Reflection on journeys and images, such as those below, can enable the music therapist to have a fresh perspective on their own relationship with music and spirituality, re-evaluating the music they create and listen to in their personal lives.

Clinical

Authentic self-presence evoked by the GIM process - its role in a more authentic therapeutic identity

I suggest that my study of GIM as enabled a mature and deep reflection on my relationship with music, and has impacted on my clinical work as a result of this.

Working using active music therapy with a group of service users at a hospice, I was able to attend to the music created by participants and observe its qualities using similar processes to the guiding element of GIM. Post-improvisation discussion enabled participants to begin to think about their relationship with music, and how they could potentially use music listening at home to evoke and reflect their moods.

It was as though the group began to see the potential of music listening to "stretch the imagination, freeing and expanding the listener to transcend their current mode of presence in the world" (Beck 1997).

Students undertaking clinical practice in the hospice environment have begun to consider how best to use music listening in this context.

Pedagogical

"Impact on teaching and students self-supervision

Elements of GIM/MI practice are being incorporated into the course delivery of the MA Music Therapy. I have found these techniques enable me to experience the students differently and shed light on their needs, abilities, and learning styles. Connecting with them and acknowledging the importance of spirituality seems important.

Year 1 MA Music Therapy - An induction week experiential with the focus of a tree was offered. Students listened to the Adagio from Beethoven's Emperor Piano Concerto, and then created an image. There was a chance to discuss the process afterwards.

"I immediately felt so safe, which was good as I am embarking on a journey that will change me forever."

Year 2 MA Music Therapy - a group supervision session was framed with short music listening experiences to facilitate thinking around the working alliance. Students were encouraged to create an image of themselves and their client. Solveig's Song by Grieg, and Wilma's Theme by Larsson were used to contain the thinking.



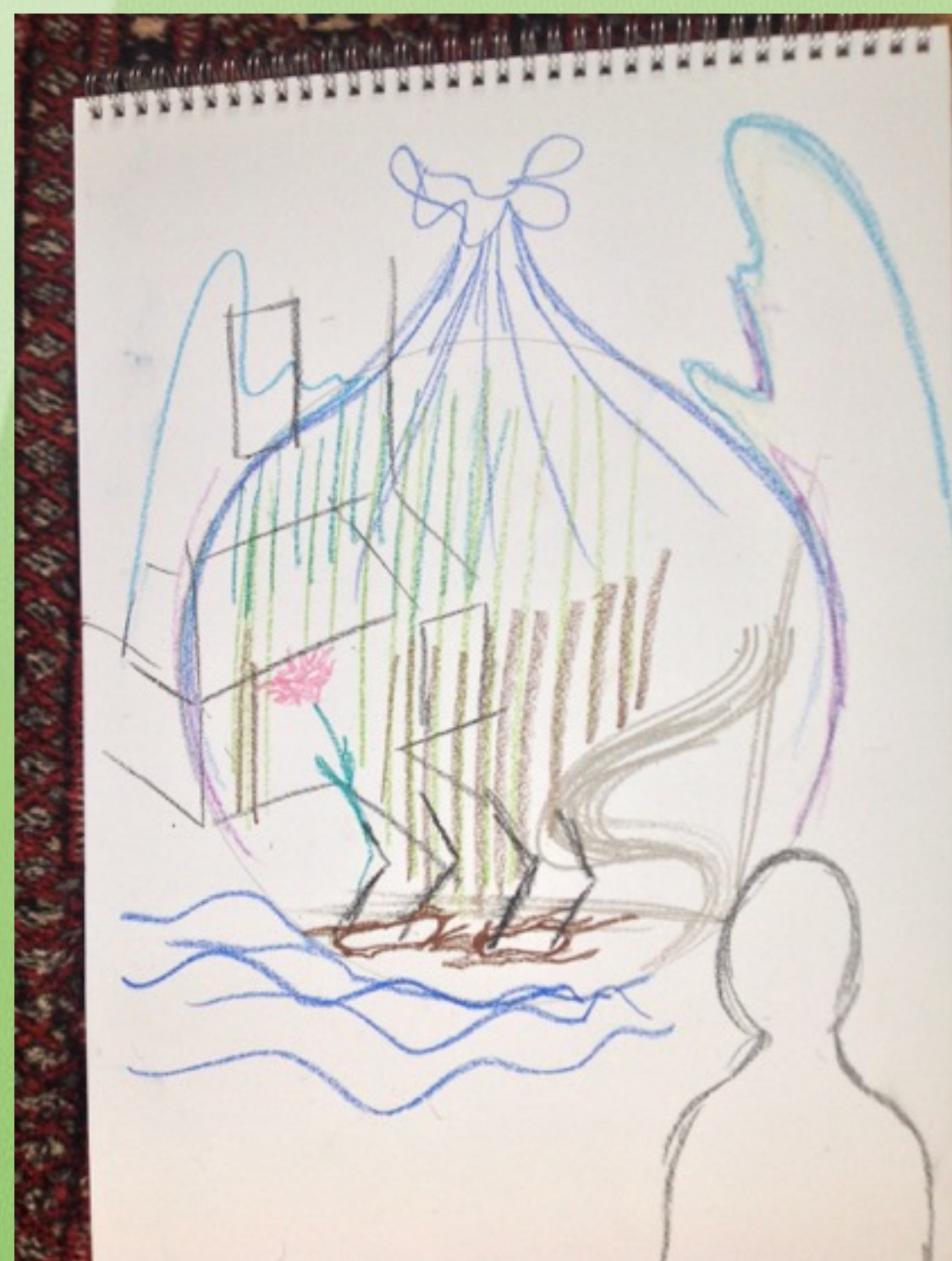
Year 3 MA Music Therapy - On the final day of training a group session used Richard Strauss' "Entsagung" from the 'Transitions' Bonny programme to facilitate their journey into the professional world of music therapy... Movement, darkness and light were used, with curtains drawn and torch beams piercing the darkness.

A student reflected:

"I felt uplifted and excited to finally be emerging into the world of music therapy with all that brings"

References:

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