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Review of: *Jungian Music Psychotherapy: When Psyche Sings* (Joel Kroeker)

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(Joel Kroeker)

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Book Review

Jungian Music Psychotherapy: When Psyche Sings

Joel Kroeker

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First and foremost, Joel Kroeker's *Jungian Music Psychotherapy* seems to be written for the Jungian psychoanalytic community to inspire the use of music and sound in Jungian psychoanalysis and to contribute to the scarcity of literature on the topic of music and psychoanalysis.

Kroeker is well qualified as a Jungian analyst, music therapist, musician, and composer to examine and write about the role of music within psychoanalytic psychology. He achieves this through an extensive and well-researched survey of the ideas and works of Carl Jung and other psychoanalysts, music composers and music therapists, Buddhist teachers, philosophers and writers, as well as the ideas of psychoacoustics and cognitive musicology.

For the music therapist, Kroeker introduces Jungian psychoanalytic information and presents a deepened model of music psychotherapy using well-illustrated frameworks and approaches that can be helpful and validating for their work. Kroeker defines archetypal music psychotherapy (AMP), as a process that "... involves accessing, amplifying and integrating unconscious material through musical means while exploring the dynamics that emerge along the way" (p. 71). He describes AMP as a way of relating to musical symbolic content with the aim being to support the individuation journey towards more wholeness by engaging the musical self.

For Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) therapists, this book offers an interesting exploration of how sound and music are transformed into mental images and symbolic material. There are a few references made to articles written by GIM therapists on music therapy from a Jungian perspective in the book's chapter, "A Conspicuous Silence," which addresses the absence of literature and music in analytic psychology. However, the GIM articles are not discussed and there is a feeling of GIM's absence throughout the book, perhaps a call to GIM

therapists to contribute more to the psychotherapy literature.

Kroeker gives numerous, well-illustrated examples of musical frameworks and approaches that engage the unconscious. He is thorough in his discussion as he addresses navigating transference and countertransference, maintaining the analytic container, the benefits of holding tension, musical metaphors in songwriting and improvisation, and the power of music to initiate new libido energy and bypass defenses and blocks. He suggests best practice protocols for handling musical equipment and time management, safe ways to provide support and begin exploring sound, and how to work musically with defenses and resistance.

He cautions about shutting down the client's unconscious emerging material, and addresses the pitfalls of judging what is "good" music and interpreting the musical improvisation. He suggests ways to apply Jung's steps for dream interpretation and Mark Winborn's four-stage cycle of interpretation to the musical ideas being explored. Some guiding principles are provided as to when a client shifts into or expresses a musical idea or for when there are no words to express what is trying to emerge, and for contraindications of when to use structured song writing rather than improvisation with trauma work and psychosis.

Building upon Jung's well-known quote that "music should be an essential part of every analysis" (Tilly, 1977), Kroeker explores and theorizes on Jung's relationship to music and his understanding of psychic processes by exploring how psychic contents emerge through sound and music. He provides a comprehensive explanation of how to work analytically with musical symbols in an effort to inspire and assist psychoanalysts in analyzing and understanding their patient's experience from a musical perspective.

The first half of the book provides a history of the role of music in healing throughout cultures, compares the role of the music analyst to the role of

the musician, surveys the wide range of uses of music from health care to marketing, explores the conditions for classifying something as music along with the cultural and social constructs of music, and looks at the evolution of the hearing mechanism. Kroecker goes on to explore how sounds take on symbolic content, induce reverie-like states, and become mental images. He shares many illustrative examples of musical methods, such as improvisation and songwriting, to show how a musical approach can be effectively used to access symbolic and metaphorical themes.

In the second half of the book, Kroecker defines AMP further and passionately illustrates his model of archetypal music psychotherapy. He is successful in providing a thorough exploration of how the psyche meaningfully manifests itself through music and is able to illustrate the relationship between Jungian depth psychology and music as a vehicle for meaningful symbolic content in a clinical setting. He inspires in the analyst an attitude to listen for the musicality of the psyche and the musical communication that emerges in psychotherapy and to develop the capacity to think and experience musically.

This book presents a deep model of music therapy for music therapists and, as Winborn states in his forward to the book, Kroecker “. . . lays out Jung’s model of the psyche for the music therapist seeking to enrich their work through an integration of Jungian theory” (p. xvii). Kroecker’s passionate and inspired voice comes through in his book; however his dense, academic writing style is filled with Jungian terminology and may be challenging for some readers.

Simultaneously, Kroecker is tangling with the difficult topic of the therapeutic role of music in the

world of psychotherapy and healing and the fact that music belongs to everyone. He is taking a step to bridge the depth method of Jungian psychotherapy and music therapy. Music therapists may be concerned with his use of the terms “musical-analyst” and “music-centred psychotherapist” and the suggestion that the Jungian psychoanalyst Mark Winborn is left with: that the “. . . analyst (does not) need to have any formal training or proficiency in music to participate in a musically centered therapeutic process, only a willingness to become open to the inherent musicality of the psyche” (p. xvii).

This book is important for music therapists to read for two reasons: one, it is a contributing model of music therapy; and two, Kroecker’s voice is inspiring, educating the Jungian psychoanalytic community and creating a bridge to music therapy. Perhaps developing psychoanalysts’ awareness of another level of communication through sound and music is not only of benefit to their clients but also to the field of music therapy. A deeper understanding of and respect for music therapy may create more ambassadors for our field, promoting its growth and creating more demand for music therapy and music therapists.

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