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Review of: *Music and the brain. A fantastic odyssey combining art and science*
(Michael Rochon)

Critique de : *Le cerveau et la musique : une odysée fantastique d'art et de science* (Michael Rochon)

Vaillancourt, G, Concordia
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Book Review

Le cerveau et la musique : une odyssée fantastique d'art et de science

Michel Rochon

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Michel Rochon is a science and medical journalist whose career spanned 30 years with various teams at Radio-Canada, working primarily on documentaries and science programs for television. French-language books about music and the brain are few and far between, and only a subset of them include a chapter on music therapy with Canadian and Quebec examples. Michel Rochon has forged very close ties with Quebec's community of music therapists and has reported on their work and delved into studies of the brain, music, and music therapy.

This book—which is a pleasure to read—describes nothing less than a journey into the universe of sound, taking us from the origins of the universe to present-day research and its applications in various fields, including neuroscience, medicine, and music therapy. The author explains complex concepts in everyday terms, thus helping us understand the influence of music on our day-to-day lives. Each of the 13 chapters—all of them equally fascinating—comes with a list of resources and references that can be used to explore the topic more deeply.

The opening chapter—*Le silence dans l'univers* (“A Silent Universe”)—deals with the distant origins of sound, which date back to the birth of the universe, out of complete silence, 14 billion years ago; it took several million more years for the planets' atmospheres and water to materialize, which made sound waves perceptible. In the next section, titled *Capter les sons de la Terre* (“Capturing the Sounds of the Earth”), the author compellingly describes the evolution of our sense of hearing—which appeared more than 350 million years ago—and the development and complexity of the human ear. Next comes *Émergence de la parole et de la musique* (“The emergence of words and music”)—a topic of particular interest to music therapists. The first humans used music as a mode of expression, which led to recognition of the phylogenesis of humanity or the unavoidable link between all humans over the course of evolution.

The chapter titled *Mais qu'est-ce que la musique?* (“What Exactly Is Music?”) reveals the very essence of music and the musical elements that define us on a day-to-day basis, unbeknownst to us. Another chapter—*Comment le cerveau décode-t-il la musique?* (“How Does the Brain Decode Music?”)—uses neuroscience to teach us about the close links between the brain and music, and the brain's affinity for music. *Le cerveau des musiciens* (“The Musician's Brain”) is a fascinating exposé on how learning music is of benefit to the brain, while *Les désordres de la musique* (“Music-related Disorders”) examines conditions rarely talked about, such as amusia. Two other chapters—*Musique et médecine: depuis toujours!* (“Music and Medicine: Since the Dawn of Time!”) and *Musicothérapie : une porte qui s'ouvre* (“Music Therapy: Emerging Potential”)—cover topics that are more familiar to music therapists. Michel Rochon writes with thoroughness and precision about the latest advances in these fields. The remaining chapters (*De la musique dans nos gènes* (“Music in Our Genes”), *Les animaux et la musique* (“Animals and Music”) and *L'avenir du cerveau musical : des cyborgs à l'intelligence artificielle* (“The Future of the Musical Brain: From Cyborgs to Artificial Intelligence”) are just as interesting and offer a glimpse of the future.

This book is a wonderful overview of topics ranging from the evolution of sound to the role of music in our lives today. The author pays tribute to music—in all of its simplicity and complexity—while remaining firmly grounded in research and practice, knowing that nothing is static and we still have a great deal to learn about “the art of sound.” I can only thank him for this work which reviews the status of music at this point in our evolution and is truly an “ambassador” for our profession.

Guylaine Vaillancourt, PhD, MTA

Guylaine Vaillancourt is an Associate Professor of Music Therapy and Chair of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada). She is a trainer and practitioner of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM). She was previously French co-editor for the *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy*, and has served as Chair of the Association québécoise de musicothérapie and the Canadian Association of Music Therapists.