# Editorial: Connect, Contribute, Collaborate

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Alison: Hello May! I’m laughing at us both writing at once. Amazing technology! It feels a bit like the marauder’s map!

May:    Ha ha! Wish we could record the screen! Would be funny to document this!

So began our draft editorial, as we collaborated online in real time on a Google document. Our process of co-authoring continued in individual bursts over several weeks. How ever did we manage before email, Google Documents, Zoom, and the myriad now commonplace digital tools and media! Technology is such a key player in supporting the collaborative process – we are grateful we have these tools at our disposal.

Collaboration – the theme of last year’s symposium (Music Therapy New Zealand, 2021) – remains a key motivating force in music therapy practice and advocacy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Collaboration is central to this issue’s three co-authored articles, all coincidentally focusing on therapeutic choirs.

Hazel Barrett (music therapist) and Catriona McKenzie (speech-language therapist) report on a school choir initiative for students who use assistive and augmentative communication (AAC). As a fine example of an innovative transdisciplinary, ecological approach, this article resonates with Rickson and McFerran’s (2014) celebration of music in schools: “Musical relationships, whether they are between individuals, small groups, classes, or school communities, can significantly change people’s lives for the better” (p. 398).

Jenny Gordon, a 2019 music therapy graduate, offers a candid insight into her experiences as a student practitioner-researcher, co-authored with her academic supervisor, Associate Professor Sarah Hoskyns. This offers an insight into some of the challenges for music therapy students, practical suggestions, and reflections from the perspective of an emerging music therapist. This article illustrates the place of research in practitioner training, particularly the  “interactive loop - the ‘back and forth’ from research to practice” (Hoskyns, 2013, p. 92).

In a Community Voices article, Alison Talmage and international colleagues, speech pathologists Ellen Bernstein-Ellis and Bronwen Jones, chart the parallel histories of three aphasia/neurological choirs. The international network established by Ellen and Bronwen has become a supportive online community of practice. In a further example of flexible, collaborative roles, May (Assistant Editor) managed this article’s open review process.

The theme of collaboration is also evident in the two books reviewed in this issue. Rachel Foxell gives a thoughtful review of The Handbook of Music Therapy and Autism Across the Lifespan: A Spectrum of Approaches edited by Dunn et al. (2021). . This book discusses current trends in collaborative, improvisational approaches to working with neurodiverse people in the UK. Susan Hadley’s edited book, Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy, reminds us of the reality of our interconnectedness as human beings and that who we are and what we do impacts ourselves, our clients, and our practice.  The 18 personal narratives in the book bring to awareness our ethical responsibility to engage in a process of  critical self-reflection.

Our 2022 “Publications Alert” highlights music therapy theses, professional music therapy writing, and Music Therapy Week outputs. Special congratulations to Ajay Castelino (2022) for successfully defending his PhD thesis, investigating a consultative music therapy approach with families. Two MMusTher students have also completed their theses: congratulations to Chris O’Connor (2022) and George Parker-Brien (2022). We also list new publications by Daphne Rickson, Carolyn Shaw, Alison Talmage, and Sarah Hoskyns with co-author Waireti Roestenburg.

As editors, we seek to honour our role and duty as guardians of this journal. We do not do this alone. Thank you to all contributing authors, reviewers, advisers, proofreaders, and printer. In particular, we wish to thank the journal advisory panel and members of the wider community who contribute to the integrity of this journal. As music therapists, as an editorial team, and as people, we have our personal biases. At times we all struggle to steer a steady course as we  journey together and navigate ethical dilemmas. Our individual and shared commitment to collegiality and courageous conversations reflects the values of Music Therapy New Zealand (2022):

* Life / ora;
* Reciprocity / whanaungatanga;
* Creativity / auahatanga; and
* Professionalism / te taumata.

Communication with other music therapists is one factor influencing our professional identity (Warren & Rickson, 2016). Alongside our in-person connections, reading and writing are ways to share with and learn from our colleagues. We welcome and encourage submissions from music therapists and related professionals, novice and experienced writers alike. We also acknowledge several authors and reviewers who have work in progress. Good things take time - particularly during a pandemic.

Do take time to read and reflect on the contents of this journal. Both the authors and editors welcome readers’ feedback and suggestions. We do not have a marauder’s map to illustrate how and where music therapists are working! We do have this journal, the MThNZ newsletter, regional groups, and digital and social media. Extending Gordon and Hoskyns’ words (in this journal) to our wider professional practices:

So is it about them or me? It is about all of us. It is about relationships: me with myself, me with the group members, and member to member. We are part of a group, a community, and everyone counts.

(Gordon & Hoskyns, 2022, p. 18)

As we come to the end of 2022 and look to the year ahead, let us continue to connect, contribute, and collaborate through our music and through our stories.

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