

*Qualitative Inquiries in Music Therapy*  
2010: Volume 5, pp. 116–172  
Barcelona Publishers

## INTEGRATING MUSICAL AND PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC THINKING: RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORDS AND MUSIC IN CLINICALLY IMPROVISED SONGS

Alan Turry

### ABSTRACT

This study is a naturalistic inquiry examining the relationship between lyrics and music in improvised songs that were created in the context of Nordoff-Robbins music therapy sessions. The material was drawn from the therapy process of a woman who came to music therapy as a result of being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The author served as both the researcher and the therapist. The study builds on the current literature regarding Nordoff-Robbins music therapy in several ways: 1) it addresses the dearth of literature regarding adult work and psychological processes; 2) it addresses directly the interaction between music and words, something that has not been extensively written about; and, 3) it sheds further light on the shared mutual process of song formation—words and music—between therapist and client, with special focus on the musical directions that emerge within the process of improvisation and how these can result in music that has clinical significance and benefit for the client.

### INTRODUCTION

Client sings:

*You listen to me deeply*

Therapist plays:

Single tones from the piano gently, slowly, sounds sustained to create harmony which contextualizes the client's melody, creating momentum and leaving space for the voice to continue

*And that makes me cry*

A new minor harmony from the piano supports the sentiment of the words

*Just when I got used to not ever being heard*

The tender accompaniment pauses, then comes to a temporary resting place

*I stopped talking*

A countermelody from the piano gently echoes the melody

*Oh I seem to talk*

A pulse generated from the melody is now present in the harmony

*People thought I talked*

There is a rhythmic quality that now creates a gentle swing

*But I didn't speak from my heart*

A song form with pulse and phrase structure emerges

*Music goes to places that words can never go*

The intensity builds

*Music goes to places that words can never go*

The lyric repetition solidifies the song form

*Finding my true voice*

The music begins to cadence, slowing down and clearly heading for the tonic

*Not being afraid*

The music and words slow down

*You listen to me deeply*

A final harmonic cadence

*And that makes me whole*

The music and words come to a place of completion

The interaction described above represents a decisive moment that took place in a music therapy session where the spontaneous vocal expression of the client combined with the therapist's music from the piano to create a song of great clinical importance that contributed to the client's overall improvement. Many improvised songs were created during the course of treatment, and the audio recordings of them comprise the material under study. All of the material analyzed in this study was drawn from this one course of treatment: the therapy process of a woman who came to music therapy as a result of being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Throughout this document the client will be referred to using the pseudonym Gloria. I was the therapist who created the music with her.

The improvised songs that emerged over the 8-year period of time under study came in a variety of forms and styles. They were sung in different ways that revealed different aspects of Gloria's personality and her changing emotional state. The unfolding of the song form allowed me as therapist to guide and alter Gloria's psychological process while offering a creative vehicle of expression.

The audio recordings that comprise the archival material under study were produced as a routine component of the clinical method of Nordoff-Robbins music therapy. As researcher, I examined the relationship between the lyrics and the music in these improvised songs. The quality of the songs in this course of therapy—the combination of musical form and psychological process revealed in the songs—afforded an opportunity to understand how particular musical elements can have a psychological effect on the

client, and how a client's musical expression can reveal her psychological condition. The study illuminates my method of improvising music when a client sings words and includes detailed analysis of the musical events that took place during the creation of the songs.

## RELATED LITERATURE

The improvised songs chosen for examination offer an opportunity to understand the linkages of musical processes with psychological processes. In music therapy research to date there has been limited focus on words and music, and on the linkages of musical processes and psychological processes. While the topic of improvisation in music therapy has been widely written about (Nordoff & Robbins, 1977; Bruscia, 1987; Aigen, 1995, 1996, 2005; Aldridge, 1991; Amir, 1990; Ansdell 1995; Austin, 2001, 2003; Brown & Pavlicevic, 1996; Etkin, 1999; Fidelibus, 2004; Forinash, 1992; Hesser, 2002; Keith, 2004; Lee, 1989, Pavlicevic, 1999; Sorel, 2005; Turry, 1998, 2002; Turry & Turry, 1999; Turry & Marcus, 2003), the subject of the relationship between words and music and the therapist's creative process has not been examined in great detail (Robarts, 2003). In a recent extensive review of research studies involving an analysis of the music in music therapy (Bonde, 2005), not one study included music in relation to words that were improvised and sung by a client. By examining the unfolding improvisation process that led to song forms, this study may be helpful in illuminating the integration of psychological and musical processes in the service of a client.

### Research in Music Therapy Related to Words and Music

A review of the research on words and music in music therapy reveals a tendency on the part of researchers to study each as a separate phenomenon rather than examining them together, even when they emerge simultaneously as in the formulation of improvised songs. This is problematic when considering the interconnected nature of words and music in songs and the power that songs have in terms of therapeutic impact and meaning. Magill Bailey (1984) reported on the effectiveness of songs in working with cancer patients and their families. She described the major themes from the patient's song choices and came up with nine categories including songs of hope and songs about feelings. She concluded that the themes of song choices often corresponded to what she described as the three stages of the music therapy process: "contact, awareness, and resolution" (p.10). Dileo (1999) writes about the importance of songs in the treatment of oncology patients. Though she does not address the process of improvising songs, her thorough description of why songs are important in general and how they function specifically for clients who are medically challenged is relevant for this study. She postulates that songs "provide resources for resolving conflicts" (p.152). The concept of resolution is particularly significant for Gloria as her lyrics often depicted conflicts and her search and discovery of solu-

tions. However, neither Magill Bailey nor Dileo included any detailed analysis of the music of these songs. Their analysis and conclusions are based solely on an analysis of the lyric content.

This tendency to leave out the musical analysis in researching music therapy content that consists of words and music together can also be seen in Austin's research. Austin (1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2002, 2004), a music psychotherapist who employs vocal improvisation in her practice, has written extensively about traumatized clients and the power of singing in working to overcome the effects of trauma. Her focus on how singing can both tap into deeply held psychological conflicts of the client and be an instrumental factor in finding resolutions to those conflicts is quite illustrative and important for the field. She has developed specific techniques utilizing vocal improvisation. In a previous publication (Turry & Turry, 1999), Austin's vocal holding technique, which alternates two chords in order to establish a harmonic container for the client to sing with, was compared to the improvisational song forms created in the course of music therapy under discussion in this proposed study. Though her approach is improvisational, many of the musical parameters are pre-determined. Austin's technique pre-determines the harmony and overall musical structure before the actual improvisation. The client chooses beforehand the two chords he or she wishes to sing with, and these two chords are maintained by the therapist without much variance. Much of the improvisational aspect of the approach comes in the way the therapist sings with the client. The music from the piano remains, for the most part, unvarying. In Austin's doctoral research (2004), the words were examined in detail to understand the psychology of the client and the therapy process, but the musical elements were not analyzed in detail.

Robarts (2003), a Nordoff-Robbins trained therapist who has integrated psychodynamic therapy theory into her approach, examines the improvised songs created in a course of music therapy with a girl who suffered early trauma. She eloquently describes the quality and potency of improvised songs:

When a song arises in music therapy, we hear something special. Freshly minted in the moment, song comes from the deepest roots of our being, our embodied self, and enters the creative flow of life. Person means literally "to sound through" and so the voice, with its subtleties of intonation, rhythmic flow, intensity, and texture, carries the essence of each person's individuality. As a bridge between our inner and outer worlds, and in the borderland between conscious and unconscious life, song can communicate our innermost feelings. Whether in a rush of joy or anger, in the turmoil of anxiety or the tranquility of musing and reflection, when a song grows from spontaneously expressed feelings it is in a sense both a container and transformer of feelings, whereby new meanings may be forged. Songs seem designed to communicate something essential and significant, and are at their most powerful when drawing from lived experience. In music therapy, they can become a means of experiential integration, addressing past and present and helping the client look ahead to the future

(p.142).

Robarts' study is directly related to the material under discussion here. She describes her method in creating the songs with her client, a child named Lyndie, stating, "as her song develops, I accompany her, maintaining a steady pulse, harmonically enhancing changes of mood, vocal inflections, and evolving imagery" (p.166). She sought to deepen the emotional content of Lyndie's words with the music she created with her at the piano. Robarts brought predictability in chord progressions to create a safe refrain to return to "when the musical development of emotional expression" (p.158) was more than her client could handle in the moment. Robarts clinical approach was similar to the approach taken in creating the material in this study. It does not contain a detailed analysis of the words and music as the improvisation unfolds.

## RESEARCH FOCUS

Improvising words and music to create songs with clients is an established clinical intervention. Yet there is very little in the literature about the musical elements utilized and the relationship between the music and words. This study addresses the question: How can the clinical improviser integrate musical and psychological thinking with more awareness of this relationship and with more sensitivity to the musical options available? This study builds on the current literature regarding Nordoff-Robbins music therapy in several ways: 1) it addresses the dearth of literature regarding adult work and psychological processes; 2) it addresses directly the interaction between music and words, something that has not been extensively written about; and, 3) it sheds further light on the shared mutual process of song formation—words and music—between therapist and client, with special focus on the musical directions that emerge within the process of improvisation and how these can result in music that has clinical significance and benefit for the client.

### The Central Issues of This Study

As the research process unfolded, it became clear that I was drawn to consider several issues regarding the archived material. Three central issues contained within this analysis regarding the interconnected nature of music and words in clinical improvisation are:

1. How music helps to shape and define the emotional meaning of the words.
2. The relationship between music and emotion.
3. The relationship between emerging musical process and psychological process.

## The Sources Used to Explore These Issues

Two sources that have influenced this study in particular are *The language of music by Cooke (1959)* and *Deeper than reason: Emotion and its role in literature, music, and art by Robinson (2005)*. Both Cooke and Robinson have developed ideas that helped me to make explicit the tacit understandings I had regarding the elements of music and the relationship of music to emotion and psychological processes.

Cooke's analysis was more specifically about musical elements and their emotional qualities. His ideas about major and minor tonalities, how tempos create different types of tension and the significance of the direction of tones were particularly useful.

Robinson focused on the importance of psychology and emotion in understanding what qualities music holds. She developed a method of understanding music by hearing the psychological drama inherent in musical forms as they develop. Her emphasis on music as an emerging and shifting process, and how this was directly related to emotion as a process that emerges and shifts through cognitive monitoring, was helpful in considering the material under study.

I do not consider the ideas that Cooke and Robinson articulate as absolute truths, but as I listened to the material under study and tried to understand it more clearly, Cooke and Robinson's ideas made many of my intuitive hunches about the music-word relationship more explicit. This happened during the research process; therefore I have included their ideas to help explicate my research method. This will help the reader in understanding how I developed the findings.

## METHOD

There is little precedent for the study of the relationship between words and music in music therapy improvisation. As a result, there was no pre-existing method that could be applied to this study. The method that I finally arrived at emerged gradually from my immersion in the data. In a way, the method was created, of necessity, as the study proceeded. The method used is simultaneously an outcome of the study. This is characteristic of qualitative research.

In order to describe and explain the way the archived material under study was examined, information from various sources will be shared and various relevant research perspectives introduced to the reader for consideration. This is because my approach was an eclectic one influenced by several sources. This is not uncommon when doing qualitative research. Aigen (1995) writes that:

. . . researchers tend not to follow one research paradigm completely, instead picking and choosing those aspects of different approaches that make sense for the needs of a given study. This pragmatic, flexible eclecticism is actually in the spirit of qualitative research approaches that argue that one's method should never take precedence over the content of a

study, but rather be flexibly adaptable to the needs of a specific research milieu (p.330).

In this section, I will discuss research perspectives that informed the present study, such as naturalistic inquiry, musicological analysis, and the Nordoff-Robbins approach to music and music therapy. I include aspects of the Nordoff-Robbins approach here because built into the clinical approach is a method of analysis called indexing. Indexing is used as a clinical tool during the treatment process; I also utilized this indexing method as a research tool.

Nordoff and Robbins also developed particular ideas regarding the forces of music which have been a major influence for me in my clinical practice. So I will include aspects of my training and experience as a Nordoff-Robbins music therapist, including my work with Gloria. I will also share my personal relationship to music, as this is both an important component to understanding my use of music as a therapist and is a way of sharing my stance as a researcher.

This study is my attempt to share the essential qualities that emerged from specific material from one course of therapy with the hope that it may be useful for other music therapists utilizing improvisation when a client sings words. I have chosen material from one course of therapy in order to present “clinical theories in the context of clinical work,” as this is “the primary way that others can determine the value and realm of application of these ideas” (Aigen, 1996, p.22).

Every client who attends music therapy at the Nordoff-Robbins Center signs an agreement giving written permission for the sessions to be recorded and that these recordings would be included in the Center’s archives for future research purposes. When Gloria began therapy with me she readily agreed to these conditions.

There were several reasons why I chose to study the improvised songs created with Gloria. Gloria displayed unique qualities while participating in the therapy process. Though she was not a trained musician, she was unusually open to the musical experience. She listened to the music with an intensity that allowed her to be moved by it. Her expressive capacities emerged as she improvised tones and melodic phrases with words. In addition Gloria was a person who had experience as a client in verbal psychotherapy and recognized the value of exploring her feelings and gaining insight into her psychological issues, yet recognized the difference in the music-making process inherent in music therapy and the opportunities it held. Together we improvised music that had both expressive intensity and psychological meaning for her. Often this improvised music developed into songs. The therapeutically powerful experience of creating these songs, the amount of songs that were created, their depth and breadth, and the meaning they held for Gloria were quite significant and unusual.

Another reason I chose to study this particular course of therapy was that the outcome was positive. Gloria reported that her life was more fulfilling, and she was more involved with people and projects related to music after creating these songs in music therapy. The effect of music on her life and the link to music therapy was clear. The songs were a vital part of this link. This is because Gloria, in a rare development for a

course of individual music psychotherapy, learned the song improvisations and shared them publicly. She organized public gatherings during which she played excerpts from actual sessions and sang the songs live as well. She created projects to record the songs with musicians, sang the songs at conferences and workshops, and participated in a variety of public forums sharing her process in music therapy and her involvement in music. The songs became affirmations of the changes she was making and a way for her relationship to music to continue to flourish.

## Trustworthiness

Naturalistic inquiry includes mechanisms that are designed for establishing the trustworthiness of the findings. This has particular relevance because I was both researcher and a participant in the creation of the material being studied. This dual role challenged me to identify areas of personal bias, needs, and assumptions I may have held as a clinician that might have impeded my ability to look at the material openly as a researcher. Trustworthiness mechanisms, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and peer debriefing helped to uncover my preconceived perceptions formed as a clinician. They helped me to sort out what was my clinical theory and ideas related to working with words and music that I already held as I began the study and what I was actually finding in the data as a researcher. For instance, I had believed that the repeating of a melody tone was an indication that Gloria was stuck or distancing herself emotionally. What I found was that there could be several reasons why Gloria was singing one tone, and in fact the singing of one tone was at times a way for her to experience more emotion, to get more deeply into the experience.

As a researcher I asked myself if there were times where I was reading more into the relationship between music and words than was actually there because of my own need to feel effective as a therapist. Was I making conclusions regarding the psychological meaning of the musical experience in order to confirm an already formed clinical theory? Was I reading too much significance into the relationship between the music and the words as they emerged? These questions helped me uncover my assumptions and review my method as forthrightly as possible. The trustworthiness mechanisms built into the naturalistic approach, such as prolonged engagement and peer debriefing, helped me in wrestling with these questions. Sharing my clinical philosophy is a mechanism to help the reader come to their own conclusions regarding these issues.

## The Researcher's Work

An interesting phenomenon that took place during the research was my resonating with certain material that reflected my own emotional state as a researcher. I found myself feeling drawn to and animated by words that described the client's struggle in finding a voice, in finding a place. This reflected my own insecurities in coming to terms with my



challenge as a researcher. I had to reflect on how my emotional state as a researcher was playing upon my listening and analysis of the music-word relationship under discussion in the study. Just as Gloria met challenges that led to her struggle in finding her voice by singing, I was challenged to find my voice as a researcher. Certain words from the archival material found their way into my mind even when I was not actively engaged in the research; and this was an indication to me of my own process.

Although the research was exciting and engaging to me, there were times I felt burdened by it and wanted to escape it, to “cut the chains” as Gloria sang in one particular excerpt. Several phrases from the audio excerpts stuck with me. The particular phrases describing Gloria’s struggle to overcome a difficulty stayed in my mind, and I had the realization that this was due in part to my similar feelings regarding the challenge of writing of the research.

I noticed that I remembered certain themes more than others, and considered that this was significant. It could have been that I liked the music that had psychological significance to me, that in some way I identified with the issue and the emotional quality of the music. For example, as I started the research analysis with Gloria’s lyric “I have no voice,” I wondered whether choosing this particular lyric to start with revealed my own state as I started the research. I wondered whether I would “have a voice” and find a way to share data in a way that makes sense. I wondered whether I would find my voice to communicate the essences that emerge from looking at the rich material that lay before me.

Robinson (2005) points out that how listeners may respond emotionally depends on whether or not they identify with the psychological drama, or the persona established in the music. She explains “I may feel for him rather than with him. A piece of music may express nostalgia although the emotion it evokes in me is melancholy, a piece may express fear while evoking in me only anxiety” (p.358).

In retrospect, this personal identification with the issues addressed in therapy can be useful in understanding sources of empathy that took place between Gloria and me, as I identified and resonated with her struggles and created music that she found meaningful and powerful. It also indicates an understanding of her process that contributes to my findings as a researcher. There is a possibility that my ability to resonate in this area may create blind spots and overshadow other areas. This is a bias that I acknowledge. Did I pay too much attention to lyrics that had themes of struggle and conflict? Did my resonance with this material cloud my judgment and ultimately my description and analysis? Asking the reader to consider this is a way to prevent my potential blind spot from transferring to readers. There were many improvised songs that were upbeat and contained lyrics describing joyful imagery or feeling. These improvisations tended to be faster and the musical elements stabilized early on in terms of tempo and dynamics. There was less interplay between myself and Gloria in the creation of them. Therefore, although I considered them extremely valuable clinically, I did not think they would yield as much data as the songs I ultimately selected. The selection process will be described in more detail later in this section.

Discerning my emotional state as I listened to the excerpts helped me to trust my data analysis. My emotional state affected my listening. If I was feeling relaxed and generally accepting and supportive of the process, I found I could generate material. If I was anxious, concerned about deadlines or the quality of what I was doing, I tended to gloss over or miss important material without realizing. Or, I collected so much material that it no longer seemed helpful. The idea of considering my overall state, and how I was listening, was an important method of becoming more reliable as a researcher.

## Analysis

In this study, data analysis as described by Ely, et. al. (1991) was employed. This entailed analyzing the data by “lifting” the material (Ely, et. al., 1997) to find overarching themes in order to sort out the data and create categories while recursively immersing oneself in the data. I have listened to the excerpts many times over a three year period, continuing to note specific excerpts that contained qualities related to the emerging categories and entering them in a researcher’s log.

After identifying forty-eight excerpts for further study according to the criteria above, I listened to each of them once. While I was listening I noted particular excerpts to revisit. This was based on the richness of the relationship between the music and lyric content as discussed in the description of the initial selection process above. I made audio copies of each. I included the moments before an improvised song emerged and ended the recording when I heard that the musical material was no longer a song, or when the music came to a natural end. At times a song returned later in the same session and I recorded that as well.

At the same time I was selecting, I developed categories regarding the relationship between music and lyrics and entered them in my researcher’s log. The nature of these categories influenced the subsequent focus and analysis. These categories evolved as I continued to listen. Here are the original 48 categories as they emerged:

Table 1. Categories That Emerged During Recursive Listening

ELEMENTS OF MUSICAL COMPOSITION
• Forming—how songs emerge
• Blues
• Swing feel
• Countermelodies
• Rhythm
• Pulse (vs. non pulse)
• Tempo (speed)
• Rests
• Register
• Harmony
• Inner voice movement
• Intervals

• Inversions
• Melody
• Bass lines
• Articulation
• Dynamics
NON-VERBAL SOUNDS
• Singing crying, crying singing
• Humming vowels/syllables
• Guttural noises
• Sighing
• Moaning
• Laughing
LYRICS
• Pronouns—words as they reflect perspective
• Themes of lyric content—(God, family)
• Trauma
• Metaphor
• Metatheme of Gloria’s therapy in lyrics
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LYRICS AND MUSIC
• Absolute relationship—literal relationship between music and words
• Aesthetic vs. cathartic
• Multiple meanings
• Repetition—music and lyric element
• Surprises
• Metaphor
• Leading and following (mutuality) relationship
THERAPIST’S PERSPECTIVES
• Assumptions
• Excerpts chosen to listen to again
• Comments about the musical experience as it is being created
• Paradox—therapy theory
• Interventions/techniques—what is my music therapy method?
• Countertransference
• Transference
• Personal musical history of therapist and its potential significance
• Psychological theory
• Questions regarding why I did what I did
• Effects of therapy
• What do I believe vs. what I have found
• Vocal quality issues—how does the therapist listen?

Utilizing notation forced me to make choices regarding how to represent meter, measures, and key signatures. Choosing a particular key revealed a preference on my part for how I organized my thinking regarding the tones.

Staying true to the essences of naturalistic inquiry, I approached listening to the material from different perspectives. The most visceral way of exploring the material as a researcher was by playing and singing it. This approach is consistent with the arts based research approach as described by Austin and Forinash (2005). As a researcher, I sat at the piano and immersed myself in the material in the following ways:

1. Improvising, playing and singing music based on a lyric and music of an excerpt under review
2. Playing along at the piano while listening to the excerpt on headphones
3. Sight reading the musical transcription while singing the words
4. Improvising while looking at words from several excerpts
5. Improvising to develop or confirm an idea related to the analysis
6. Playing the melody that was originally sung on the piano
7. Exploring alternative harmonic and melodic choices to what was actually sung and played
8. Changing the key to see if any new insights emerge

### Narrowing the Focus of the Listening

After I had applied this listening method approximately three times through the fifteen excerpts, I decided to begin to narrow down the number of excerpts I would continue to listen to. The amount of listening perspectives made the listening process unwieldy. I found myself drawn to those excerpts that continued to yield data, and noted the excerpts that stood out to me. I also noted the categories that enabled me to collect more data as a means of narrowing my focus.

One of the categories that I continued to collect large amounts of data from was “Intervention.” I realized that I was no longer listening in an open fashion, but was trying to understand my reasons for making the musical choices that I did. Rather than continuing to listen in an open fashion with no explicit agenda, I consciously asked three questions related to therapist method as I listened to the material:

1. How does the therapist listen?
2. What does the therapist listen for?
3. What does the therapist do?

In order to discern whether my detailed musical descriptions were effective, I recursively read over the description and asked myself the following questions:

- Can I hear it in my mind?
- Does it make an emotional impact when I contemplate the music?
- Can I improvise at the piano approximating the music based on the description?

If I was able to do this, then I was satisfied that I could leave the description as it was. If I wasn't able to do this, then I tried to add or alter what I had written. I continued to return to the audio taped excerpts to help develop the written description.

## RESULTS

This section contains detailed descriptions and analyses of one of the excerpts selected for further study from the archived material. I developed a system of presenting each excerpt twice, once to familiarize the reader with the specifics of the excerpt, and the second time for a much more detailed description and analysis. The first description and analysis introduces the lyrics and the therapy process. I did this to familiarize the reader with the content and the context. I used different type—italics and quotation marks—to indicate the lyrics. The second analysis includes the same lyrics, but also includes musical notation, moment to moment analysis including past and present perspectives regarding clinical intentions, the quality of Gloria's voice, and details regarding the melodies she created, and the relationship between the emerging words and the emerging music.

Findings are embedded in this analysis. It is important to note that many of the clinical intentions and understandings that I write about from my current perspective as researcher were not conscious for me during the time of the creation of this material. The clinical approach calls for the use of intuition, spontaneity, and creative freedom in utilizing improvised music that supports and spurs on the client's development. Therefore some of what I did at the time was based on hunches, physical sensations, and emotional reactions, which fed into my musical choices. My music was informed by my clinical understanding of Gloria's psychological state, yet was not preplanned or calculated, though it was influenced by the clinical indexing process that took place each week. I did come into each session with an idea about how music was affecting Gloria and the clinical issues that were emerging and could potentially be addressed. Yet, the clinical interventions that I made with the music were not planned activities. The research process has yielded much more data and my awareness and understanding has grown significantly in understanding what I was reacting to, what my intentions were, and how I was utilizing the music. Many of the findings embedded in descriptions found in this section emerged as tacit understandings I had as therapist that have become explicit as the research process has unfolded.

"*There, There*" illustrates how music can assist in the development of contrasting perspectives, and how specific musical elements are utilized in response to particular descriptive imagery of the lyrics.

*There, There* [[www.alanturvy.com](http://www.alanturvy.com)]

This excerpt contains examples of the many attitudinal and emotional shifts that can take place within the stream of an improvisation. Gloria sings about how she can take a superficial stance towards the world, and how this is a kind of protective shield, a "bubble"

that hides her authentic feelings. She sings of the pain she is in, and then sounds angry as she blames herself for the condition she is in.

Much of Gloria's frustration is expressed here not by singing, but by speaking the words. She has a conversation with herself, taking on an impatient tone as she criticizes herself for having the same complaints again and again, using the pronoun "I" in describing her pain and "you" in expressing her frustration in dealing with the same issues again and again. There is also a dialogue taking place between us. This is because Gloria uses quite descriptive imagery and as she pauses I play particular musical elements in response to the words. She in turn responds to my music and continues her lyric creation.

In general, the music from the piano supports her shifting attitudes, playing repetitive music as she sings of her repeated complaints, and also animates her expression by adding sharply attacked single notes that are dissonant and trigger Gloria to sing with more energy, at a louder dynamic and higher pitch. This seems to shift Gloria's expression from a more cognitive experience to a more emotional one. The music helps to sustain this difficult emotional state. Then, in a mutual fashion, the music slows and becomes tender as Gloria shifts her attitude from disgust and anger to tender and sad. She takes on the position of God in her lyrics, singing comforting words of nurturance. Gloria cries as she sings. The excerpt ends as Gloria sings about God, and the music shifts to a Gospel style.

*Another thrill*

*I hide so you can't see me (Gloria snaps her fingers)*

*And I go for another thrill*

*I hide*

*So you can't see me*

In a swing style, Gloria sings happily about her self-defeating behaviors. When she celebrates her shortcomings in this way, the swing style often helps her to become unstuck and more creative in the sessions. Rather than complain about the fact that she was driven to hiding from the world, here she brings out the sense of satisfaction that she derives from hiding with the quality of her vocal expression. There was a slight sense of irony in her attitude at this point. We both were aware that hiding was not something to reinforce. Yet, in this instance the paradoxical experience of fusing happy music with this problem fueled her to explore it more deeply.

*I hide*

*So you can't see me*

*I hide*

*So you can't*

*So you can't*

*See me*

The music changes here and Gloria's story unfolds as she creates imagery describing her desire to move past the isolated stance she often takes in relating to the

world, and what lies inside her when she removes her outer “bubble.”

*I step  
Out of the bubble  
I'm a mess  
I've been cut and slashed  
I'm bleeding  
I'm throwing up*

As the imagery becomes more graphic and violent, Gloria's voice becomes more detached. She begins by talking rather than singing.

*My knees are weak  
My ankles can't hold me up very well  
Everything's fine*

Gloria often commented critically about her ability to relate to others as if everything was “fine” when in fact she was experiencing emotional pain. She also knew there were times when she could keep the fact that she was in emotional pain from her own consciousness as she went about functioning in her daily life. Now she has a dialogue between her “I” and her “you.”

*Everything's fine  
But I'm bleeding  
You did it to yourself  
You did it to yourself, who the fuck cares?*

Gloria often battled with her intense self criticism and judgment of herself. Two perspectives have clearly emerged. One persona is describing the pain and asking for help, and the other impatient, holding back and judging.

*I'm bleeding,  
I can't walk,  
I'm bleeding  
I can't walk  
What's the use of helping you?  
There's no use in helping you  
There's no use to help you because  
You're just going to do the same thing again  
Why should I help you any more?  
You keep coming in this room all bloody  
Oh you keep coming in this room all bloody*

Gloria often worried that she came to music therapy and described the same issues over and over. It was difficult for her to find a way to accept and be patient with her

exploration of issues that did not easily resolve. She was also worried that I would become tired of hearing the same issues. It may have been that her words represented her fears of what she projected I might have felt as she kept “*coming in this room all bloody.*” By taking all of her expressions seriously and supporting them musically, I attempted to help her to dissipate her worry that I would eventually tire of hearing about her painful issues.

*I'm supposed to wash you up and put bandages and ointments on you  
Comb your hair, wash your face  
Give you a place to sleep,  
Comfort you,  
Talk to you  
Listen to you  
Play music for you*

The quality of expression and the music start to shift here to a more gentle tone.

*Cuddle you and say “there, there my dear”  
“There, there my dear it’s going to be ok”  
“There, there my dear it’s going to be ok”*

At this point a song form with a predictable meter and pulse has been established. Gloria is singing now in a tender way.

*Oh my dear  
Oh my dear  
Rest with me it will be ok  
Oh my dear it’ll be ok  
I’ll wash your face  
I’ll dry your tears  
I will bind up your wounds  
I’ll wash your face*

There is a quality of nurturance in Gloria’s voice at this point as she sings with reference to the Bible and God’s perspective.

*I’ll clean you off,  
I’ll bind up your wounds  
I’ll comb your hair  
Rest my dear  
Rest my dear  
The broken pieces have  
Such sharp edges  
They’ve cut you my dear  
Oh rest my dear  
Oh rest*



*Oh rest*  
*Oh rest my dear one*  
*Oh rest*  
*I'll wash your face*  
*I'll bind up your wounds*  
*I'll comb your hair*  
*Oh rest, rest in my arms*  
*I know what you've been through*  
*I know what you've been through*  
*Oh rest, oh rest, oh rest my child*  
*God doesn't leave us, God doesn't leave us*

Another shift in perspective occurs and now Gloria sings about God, reflecting on the words she has just sung from God's perspective. The music shifts to a soft gospel feel.

*God doesn't leave us no matter what I do*  
*God doesn't leave me, God doesn't leave me, God doesn't leave me*

The intensity and contrasting qualities of emotion contained in an improvisation that lasted over nine minutes combined to create a powerful experience for Gloria. At times, the experience was physically exhausting for both of us. There was also a sense of relief and physical release. The pacing within the session was an important factor in modulating the emotional intensity.

When the issues she was wrestling with were daunting, Gloria's ability to express from different perspectives was the key to enable her to continue her process.

### Detailed Description and Analysis

Since much of the improvisation in "There, There" contains dramatic imagery, and the form of the interaction between us is call and response, this example led to the emergence and consideration of specific ideas regarding how the words Gloria chose and the quality of how she expressed them influenced the music that I played. The example begins with Gloria snapping her fingers as she sings. The music has a jazzy swing feel here and Gloria sounds happy, as if she takes pride in her ability to hide:

Swing Feel      Dsus      D      Dsus      Dsus      D<sup>7</sup>

A - no - ther thrill      I hide      so\_      you      can't      see me

Knowing her issue regarding her conflict about hiding emotionally, about not being noticed but wanting to be noticed, contributes to my consideration of her lyrics and the significance of them for Gloria. The fact that Gloria's pitch is not entirely accurate

and her vocal quality is a little wobbly is also information that I note. The swing feel has often bolstered Gloria in the past and connects her to her body as she sings:

6 Gma<sup>7</sup> Gmin<sup>7</sup> F<sup>#</sup>min<sup>7b5</sup> Bmin<sup>7b9</sup> Emin<sup>7</sup>  
 and I go for a - no - ther thrill I hide\_\_

12 Asus<sup>7</sup> D<sup>9</sup> C<sup>9</sup> D<sup>9</sup> E<sup>9</sup> D<sup>9</sup>  
 so you can't see me I hide\_\_ so you can't see me

Even as the jaunty swing feel continues, dominant ninth chords move in parallel motion containing a minor seventh interval that contributes to a more dissonant sound. This functions as a subtle form of questioning to Gloria regarding her attitude about what she is singing. The chords happen after each short phrase that she sings, creating a subtle call and response form between her melody statement and an answering harmonic statement. This foreshadows much of the form between her melody and my harmony throughout this improvisation. As I play a walking bass Gloria sings a melismatic phrase on the word “can’t,” a kind of bluesy sound that she sings with a sense of satisfaction:

18 C<sup>9</sup> D<sup>9</sup> E<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7b13</sup>  
 I hide so you ca - n't\_\_ so you

24 Gmin<sup>7b13</sup>  
 can't see me

There is some dissonance in the harmony and in combination with the bass this creates a momentary minor chord where there had previously been a major chord in the progression. There is also a subtle clash between her melody tone D and the E which is at the top of the harmony. The bass plays some tones out of the key, hinting at breaking out of the form. This is an example of a blend of emotions in the music as Robinson (2005) describes. The music is both predominantly happy and subtly questioning.

Gloria starts to sing slightly softer and holds her last tone even longer, changing the phrase structure of the melody. I respond by playing fewer notes, and the overall effect is that the music begins to lose some of its rhythmic drive. Gloria leaves space in her melody after this last note and I slow down and then completely stop the walking bass. Gloria sings this last “see me” with a gentle, vulnerable vocal quality. Keeping the same key of D major, I switch the style of the music and the emotional mood here.

I play a melodic fragment A and then F# that breaks the swing feel, holding both tones. The tempo slows and I play the D chord in second inversion in an open voicing, giving the chord a less stable quality. I then move the A up a half step from the fifth to Bb. I play the same movement an octave lower:

This half step motion upward is clearly heard, and then Gloria utters:

31

*Spoken: I step out of the bubble*

I continue the harmonic motion of a half step rising to represent the idea of stepping. The tone is a dissonance, and not in the key of D major. It is a step out of D major, mirroring a step out of the bubble.

Tones that are dissonant are added to the harmony off the beat, creating a messy sound:

36

*I'm a mess* *I've been cut and slashed*

In response to the lyric “cut and slashed,” I move from the major triad to dissonant intervals moving down on the keyboard. The downward direction relates to the idea

that being cut and slashed would trigger falling. The fact that Gloria’s voice also gets softer and falls in dynamic, contributes to the descending direction of the tones at the piano as well. The form of our musical interaction is call and response, as Gloria creates a lyric, and I respond, while sustaining tones from the piano between the interactions:

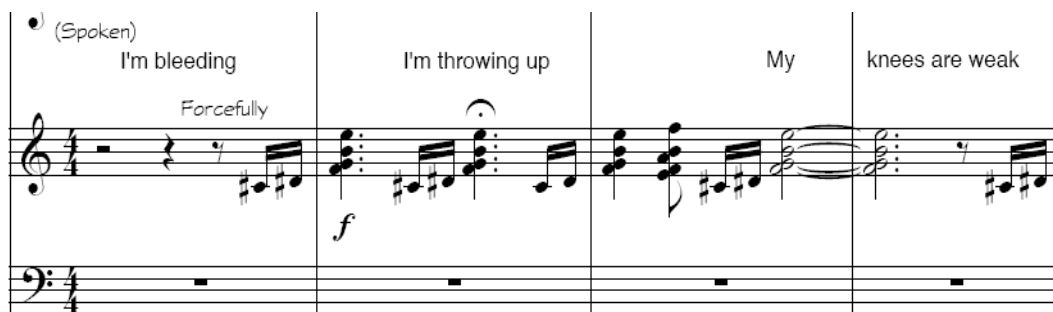


The contrast between the dramatic lyric and the hollow, almost numb tone that Gloria uses to say the word “bleeding” more than sing it, triggers a musical counter-transference in me. Rather than mirror the hollow tone, I respond to the painful verbal image her words evoke, playing forcefully with clusters in a higher register of the piano:



It is if I am saying “this is a terrible thing, the fact that you have been cut and slashed and now you are bleeding.” This is an example of a musical commentary as Robinson (2005) describes, the music commenting on the persona presented by the voice.

My music continues to convey turmoil, yet Gloria speaks the words rather than sings them with a kind of hollow detachment, with a hint of disdain:



In response to the lyric about her knees and ankles lacking support, I move to the low register, the supporting component of the piano, and play dissonant tones and intervals. The fact that the bass is moving and has dissonant tones creates a quality of instability, and this relates to the lyric describing her unstable ankles. The last harmonies that I play in the pause contain the tritone interval, amplifying the sense of instability:

Gloria sings “everything’s fine,” in a high register with notes somewhat related to the harmony I have just played. In response I play the melodic rhythm of everything’s fine, using Gloria’s last pitch as the first pitch of my phrase, and end with an ascending interval of a tritone, which gives the melody a quality of not being fine, of being strange, of being unstable. It is also noticeable because it goes up. My melody has highlighted and magnified the incongruity between the words that Gloria has sung and her vocal and musical expression. Gloria hears this melody from the piano and immediately picks up on the strange melody with the tritone:

Again I take the melody and echo it, moving it to different tonalities so that there is a questioning quality in the musical commentary. It is as if the music is saying, “everything is not fine; something is wrong, and we are not sure what is happening.” This is reflected in my lack of a clear tonal center and the emphasis on the tritone.

At this point, Gloria speaks. In response to Gloria bringing back the bleeding lyric, I bring back the dissonant clusters from the first time she used the words:

The repeating musical response to the repeating lyric statement gives the music a form. It also emphasizes the musical aspect as a contrast to the “verbal aspect” in which Gloria has again gone back to saying rather than singing the lyric. The first time I created this cluster it was a spontaneous, unpremeditated reaction. This time it is somewhat more controlled, as I am returning to it with intention. The music continues:

A musical score for the lyrics "you do it to yourself". The score is written on a grand staff with three systems of staves. The lyrics are placed between the first and second systems. The music consists of a complex, rhythmic pattern in the piano part, with a vocal line in the soprano part that is mostly silent, indicated by a long horizontal line.

Now Gloria uses the word “you,” responding to the character that was bleeding. This character has little empathy for the bleeding character:

A musical score for the lyrics "you did it to yourself who the fuck cares?". The score is written on a grand staff with three systems of staves. The lyrics are placed between the first and second systems. The music consists of a complex, rhythmic pattern in the piano part, with a vocal line in the soprano part that is mostly silent, indicated by a long horizontal line.

It is striking that Gloria curses, as it is extremely rare for her. I sense the intensity of her turmoil. I continue the dissonant thematic music first used when Gloria first mentioned her bleeding. At the end of the phrase I play a D in the bass, the key that the entire improvisation began with:

A musical score for the lyrics "I'm bleed-ing". The score is written on a grand staff with three systems of staves. The lyrics are placed between the first and second systems. The music consists of a complex, rhythmic pattern in the piano part, with a vocal line in the soprano part that is mostly silent, indicated by a long horizontal line.

I start to play a bass line, creating a slight sense of pulse, without establishing a definitive tempo:

17

The lyric “*I can’t walk*” triggers my response to abort the establishment of a pulse. Music with a pulse would not support the idea of not being able to walk. Instead I hold a minor chord with dissonance as Gloria continues to sing on the one tone D, wavering slightly below pitch as she sings:

19

Gloria’s melody stays on the one pitch D as she sings “*I can’t walk.*” I sense that the lack of direction described in her lyric is reflected in the lack of a melodic direction. On the word “*walk*” Gloria’s pitch is slightly below the D. In response I play a C# in the middle register of the piano and the grounding D tone in the bass. I then move this D–C# major seventh interval up a third to an F#–F:

20 (still sustaining chord)

The overall musical quality is that there is something unresolved, something painful, something unfinished. My analysis suggests that these two tones that form the dissonant interval are a manifestation of the conflict between the two personae that Gloria has manifested in singing the lyric: the voice that is bleeding, and the voice that is frustrated and contemptuous of the bleeding voice. The two perspectives clash, just as the two tones clash. There is very little musical change suggested here. Gloria continues to speak the words and the dissonant major seventh interval is sustained:

What's the use  
in helping you?

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. A single note is placed on the second line (F4), and a second note is placed on the third space (E4), forming a major seventh interval. The notes are connected by a horizontal line, indicating they are sustained.

Now I play the dissonant interval and move it up again, as if mirroring the ongoing and intensifying frustration that Gloria has, singing from the persona of the potential helper:

there's no use in helping you

The image shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a treble clef, containing the lyric "there's no use in helping you" and a whole note. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment with a treble clef, showing a melodic line with a sharp sign and a crescendo hairpin. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a bass clef, showing a harmonic line with a sharp sign and a crescendo hairpin.

There is a pause here as Gloria emphasizes the reason for not helping. She then continues:

There's no use to help you because  
you're just going to do the same thing  
again

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. A single note is placed on the second line (F4), and a second note is placed on the third space (E4), forming a major seventh interval. The notes are connected by a horizontal line, indicating they are sustained.

The statement—again spoken and not sung—of frustration with her repeated self-injurious behavior, triggers a musical response for me. I begin an ostinato pattern, manifesting the repetition in the lyric. Upon analysis, this is a way for me as therapist to “join the resistance,” a psychotherapy concept that was congruent with my clinical ideas, but not conscious for me in the moment. There is strong pulse in the music here as the harmony moves from a consonant to a dissonant chord:



easy swing groove  
 ♩ = 100 soft, warm

Why should I help you anymore? you keep...

GMa7 C7/F GMa7 C7/F

27

Gloria continues to speak these words rather than sing them. The volume of the music from the piano is building. While Gloria starts her spoken phrase, as she forms the word “keep,” I add a loud, sharply articulated single tone that is dissonant to the continuing harmony and hold it while the harmony continues to be driven by the same accompaniment pattern:

com-in' in this room

sub, f

G7 C7/F

The note is a Bb, and because I play it an octave higher and slightly before the G7 chord it stands out against it. Gloria reacts to the note by raising her voice to a higher register and beginning to sing rather than speak. It was not my conscious intention to trigger this, but Gloria seems to sing with more energy. Upon analysis, it is as if the note jars her back into the act of singing. Perhaps the intensity of my reaction gave her permission to give fuller voice to her own feelings, breaking through an unbroken “sound barrier,” to feel and express anger, to embrace and embody more fully the critical persona. I repeat the tone several times, reinforcing a jarring quality in the music:

all blood-y oh you keep

I play a C#, another dissonant tone as the harmonic accompaniment pattern continues. This C# played with the G major tonality emphasizes the tritone, a subtle reminder of the “everything’s fine” tritone heard earlier. It is clear that everything is not resolved, and the tritone embodies this, which is heard by Gloria as she sings the C#:

Not only is there a tritone relationship between the bass note G and the melody note of C#, but there are other intervals—F/B, E/Bb—that are also creating the sound as well. As Gloria continues to sing with some disdain about how she is “*supposed*” to have compassion for the persona who is victimized, the music from the piano starts to change:

The harmony continues to be dissonant but is softer. Because the previous syncopated harmonic accompaniment pattern has stopped, there is a sense that something new can develop. In place of the previous harmonic pattern is a kind of tumbling descending harmonic motion with dissonant intervals moving in parallel motion, and since there is no tonal clarity, it is not clear where the harmony is headed. Gloria continues to sing in a kind of detached disdain, as if the critical voice does not believe it’s worth trying to support the character that is in pain, all bloodied:

43

The words describe acts of compassion, but the tone of the singing reveals a lack of compassion. I reflect this ongoing conflict continuing to play mainly dissonant harmonies, but a quick consonant C major chord is heard. This is a different tonality and hints at relating to the actual nurturing content of the words. It lasts very briefly and the dissonant chords continue:

7

The harmony at the piano is moving to a higher register as Gloria continues to sing:

The harmony continues to contain dissonances but with a more gentle lyricism in the phrasing. An F# in the middle register of the piano is repeated and thus serves as a bass tone. The tones above it do not relate in a consonant way, but the fact that this F# tone repeats gives the music a little more anchor, a little more stability. Something is about to happen, but it is not clear what. Gloria pauses briefly and so do I. Something is starting to shift, both in the piano and in Gloria's vocal persona. The F# bass tone in the middle register now moves up and down a half step, as if manifesting the shift that is occurring and will continue to occur in the way that Gloria is using her voice:



There is a little more of a pause before Gloria utters “*talk to you,*” and in response I pause and hold the harmony notes before continuing to play. As Gloria states “*listen to you,*” I move the harmony notes to a higher place on the piano. This adds a sense of building tension in the music. Then I play an ascending run that both responds to the growing tension and adds to it. After Gloria gently and softly states “*play music for you,*” the bass moves up, and while still below the other harmony tones from the piano, begins a melodic line that is chromatic, adding a searching quality to the music. The music has contradictory qualities—tumbling yet ascending, floating upward, lightly, heading for an unforeseen destination. The image I have is of a tumble weed being blown gently. Gloria continues and on the word “*cuddle,*” she takes a tone played at the piano to this moment, a Db, and begins to sing the entire phrase:



The quality of Gloria’s voice changes here, as she sings with a more sustained tone and a quieter dynamic. She has entered into the emotional quality of the lyric content, singing “*cuddle*” and conveying a quality of gentleness needed in order to actually cuddle. The rhythm of her singing at the end of the phrase implies a triple meter. In response, I play even more gently in the higher register, and hearing her Db, I prepare to harmonize it. After she sings “*There, There my dear*” I play an Eb minor chord as she repeats the words and melody and create a phrase. An accompaniment pattern emerges just as Gloria starts to sing:

Flowing ♩ = 100 *gently, delicate*

37  $E^b\text{min}^7$   $B^b\text{min}$

There there my dear... it's go-ing to be o - kay

*p* *sim...*

Now the music has a clear pulse and meter, with gentle countermelodies occurring from the piano in the high register. At this point, the shift that has been anticipated for some time actually occurs. The piano music and lyrics now go forward jointly as the pulse and harmonic path can be anticipated by both of us. Gloria's voice sounds tender and fragile. She sustains her melody tones on the last word of the phrase and sounds as if she may be about to cry. On the last tone of her phrase, the harmony moves from Eb minor to Bb minor, so that she is singing the minor third of what is now the new tonic. The music from the piano has qualities of sadness and warmth—blends of emotion as Robinson (2005) describes—with the countermelodies actively conveying gentle support and compassion as a commentary, as Robinson (2005) also describes. Gloria is reassured by her words even as she wonders if their promise will be borne out.

The same phrase structure repeats, and Gloria enters into the music with a little more support in her voice, anticipating the return of the chord that starts the phrase again. The harmony provides predictability and stability. A gentle countermelody continues in the high register of the piano, as Gloria continues to sing now in a soft, sad voice, continuing to sing on the Db. A clear song form has emerged at this point:

65  $E^b\text{min}^7$   $B^b\text{min}$

there there my dear it's go-ing... to be o - kay

*p*

After two repetitions of the same lyric and harmony, both Gloria and I change the form of the music while keeping the same pulse. She moves to a higher tone while I move to a different chord. The form of the music is propelling both of us at this point, even while the arpeggiated accompaniment rhythm at the piano stops:

71 C<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup>

oh my dear oh my

The forward motion is provided by the anticipation of the melodic rhythm. This adds a sense of mutuality to the music in that the creation of the pulse is shared between us rather than being provided solely by the piano. I stop the pulse, and play close to the melodic rhythm that Gloria sings. I play a very soft tone that adds a dissonance to each of the chords, giving the music a sense that things are still not quite ok. But there is a gentleness created by the soft attack and articulation in the music that also lends it a comforting quality. My commentary from the piano is a gentle way of asking Gloria “Are you sure it will be ok?” The music continues:

77 Amaj<sup>6</sup>   Gmaj<sup>7</sup>   Amaj<sup>6</sup>   Gmaj<sup>7</sup>   B<sup>b</sup>min<sup>9</sup>

dear rest with me it will be o kay

On the word “ok” Gloria’s intonation begins to rise above the pitch and falters. The piano has both minor arpeggiation that has a pretty sound along with dissonant tones. The music blends the emotional qualities of pain and comfort:

83

oh my dear it'll be o -

90  $B^b\text{min}^{\#11b13}$

kay

Now the pulse of the music is being driven by the harmonic rhythm, as chords are changing after every three beats and there is a clear tonal direction, while Gloria's melody leaps up an ascending perfect fifth interval and she sings the higher tone through the measure:

$E^b\text{min}$   $G^b$

I'll wash your

This is a wider interval and higher tone than she has been singing previously. The accompaniment pattern is a series of rising arpeggios. The high melodic tone that Gloria is singing, plus the form of the accompaniment pattern, combine in a synchronous way, lending the music a flowing quality, as if flying. The chords of the progression— $E^b$  minor,  $G^b$  major,  $A^b$  major—include several major chords, giving the music a more optimistic quality. This form persists as Gloria continues:

96 A<sup>b</sup> C<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>min G<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

face \_\_\_\_\_ I'll dry \_\_\_\_\_ your tears

101 C<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>min G<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> C<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup>min

I \_\_\_\_\_ will bind up your wounds \_\_\_\_\_

The music gets softer and a little slower here, less rhythmically driven as the arpeggiation stops. Gloria is able to support herself as she continues at a louder dynamic, confidently singing with a sense of the form of the song as it goes forward:

B<sup>b</sup>min<sup>9</sup> *very delicate* A<sup>b</sup>min<sup>7</sup>

I'll wash \_\_\_\_\_ your face \_\_\_\_\_

92 D<sup>b</sup>sus G<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> G<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>6</sup> Cmin<sup>7</sup><sup>b5</sup> F<sup>7</sup><sup>b9</sup>

I'll clean \_\_\_\_\_ you off I'll bind up your wounds



90 B<sup>b</sup>- B<sup>b</sup>- E<sup>b</sup>sus E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>sus A<sup>b</sup>

There is a strong sense of mutuality in the music here as Gloria and I both arrive at the same tonality after a series of chords and melody notes that created the possibility of moving in a different tonal direction. The pulse is not emphatic, yet the entrance to the phrase happens simultaneously between us. The form of the song influenced the arrival at the familiar Eb minor tonality:

E<sup>b</sup>min B<sup>b</sup>min 128 E<sup>b</sup>min B<sup>b</sup>min E<sup>b</sup>min G<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

There is a gentle, lilting quality to the music as countermelodies fill in the space between the sustained tones of the melody.

As Gloria sings “*broken pieces*,” the melody of the lyric goes up, while the bass in the harmony goes down. At the end of the phrase, the word “*have*” is sung with the highest note, while a surprising consonant harmony is reached. This gives the music a quality of expansion and reinforces the sense of mutuality between us:

134 B<sup>b</sup>° D<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup>/A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>9</sup> D<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup>/F E<sup>6</sup>

There is a strong contrast between the vocal references to “*sharp edges*” and “*cut*,” and the smooth flowing consonance of the piano music:

This music is assisting the healing voice in tending to the wounds of the injured persona. Gloria continues to sing as we both slow down. In response to the word rest, I stop the flowing accompaniment pattern and hold the tones of the harmony, playing the melodic rhythm as Gloria sings it:

This creates the effect of reinforcing the sentiment of resting. Then a dominant B7 chord from the piano is slowly arpeggiated from low to high. The chord has an added flatted fifth so that a significant part of the chord is actually constructed with two tritones. Elements of the whole tone scale are heard in the high register. This lends a quality of mystery to the music, as if something new is going to happen. Something does happen as Gloria begins to sing a new lyric:

There is a strong shift in the music as a rubato occurs in both the voice and the piano. On the word “wounds,” a sustained countermelody acts in a metaphoric sense to heal the wounds. Gloria’s vocal quality is more gentle and relaxed here:

160 E<sup>b</sup>min B<sup>b</sup>min E<sup>b</sup>min G<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup>

face I'll bind up your wounds I'll comb

164 Cmin<sup>7b5</sup> D<sup>b</sup> F

your hair\_ Oh rest rest in my arms I

167 G<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> E<sup>b</sup>min<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>min<sup>9</sup>/F

know what you've been through I know what you've been

The tempo of the music continues to be very slow. Gloria's voice quivers as she sings, indicating she is feeling strong emotion here:

170 E<sup>b</sup>min B<sup>b</sup>min D<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>min G<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>9</sup>/A<sup>b</sup>

through Oh rest Oh rest oh rest my

As Gloria sustains the last note on the word “child,” I introduce a gentle counter-melody in the high register. It includes thirds above a harmonic progression (also in a high register) starting in minor, moving to major, and then ending in minor chords:

174 F7/A B<sup>b</sup>min D<sup>b</sup>/A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>b</sup>

child

Upon analysis, this is another instance of a moving interval reflecting an intrapersonal relationship. Earlier, the dissonant interval moving in parallel represented personae locked in ongoing conflict. Here, the gentle and consoling quality of the moving thirds represents the relationship between the healing voice persona and the wounded sufferer. The high register of the piano melody adds an ethereal quality to the music, hinting at a connection to Gloria's words being sung from God's perspective. Gloria does begin to sing about God, and the music shifts to a gospel style:

178 E<sup>b</sup>min<sup>7</sup> D<sup>b</sup>/A<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> A<sup>o</sup> F<sup>7</sup>b<sup>9</sup>

God\_\_does - n't leave us God\_\_does - n'tleave us

As Gloria sings about God rather than from her perspective speaking through Gods voice, I shift the style of music to Gospel. The tempo is flexible, and the meter is shifting, but the low bass tone and chord progression with a sense of triplet sub-division lends the music this quality. The “us” she sings about could be understood as the two voices that have been in conflict with each other, but now join together to sing about God:

181  $B^{\flat}min$   $E^{\flat 7}$   $D^{\flat}/A^{\flat}$

God...does -n't leave us no mat-terwhat I do... God

184  $D^{\flat}/A^{\flat}$   $F^7/A$   $F^7/A$

does-n't leave me God does-n't leave me

166  $B^{\flat}min$   $A^{\flat}min$

God... does - n't leave me

### Concluding Thoughts on *There, There*

As the excerpt ends Gloria sings using the word “*me*.” This is a significant indication of a shift in her psychological state. After singing from different parts of her personality and then singing about God not leaving “*us*,” she is singing as one integrated person now, rather than taking the position of one or other personae. The experience of dramatically engaging her different sub personalities helped her to bring those polarities within herself together so she could feel more whole.

## DISCUSSION

In this section I have included findings related to my process of listening and responding as therapist. The three major categories are: How did the therapist listen? What did the therapist listen for? How did the therapist respond?

The three categories are used for organizational purposes to help the reader assimilate the material. In reality it is an artificial distinction to separate listening from playing in terms of technique, because a major facility that needs to be cultivated in this approach is to listen while doing, to do while listening.

Exploring the first category, I will begin by explaining how intuition played a role in the process. Following this I will focus on therapeutic techniques, including how I approached listening, how I considered both psychological and musical perspectives, and the importance of balancing an inquisitive stance of forming questions with a sense of acceptance for what unfolded. I will describe how emotion shaped my visceral reaction and shaped my fingers, as well as go into some detail about my preparation and my state as I approached listening.

The second category, “What did the therapist listen for?” includes the perceptions that I formed as I listened. I include two tables to organize the various perceptions that formed for me during the therapy process. These tables include the emotional qualities, the musical qualities, the intentions I perceived Gloria having when she sang, the underlying stance or personae she created as she sang, the form her singing took, and who she seemed to be directing her singing to.

Within the third category, “How did the therapist respond?” I have included the presentational form of the pastiche which I found useful in trying to convey the essences of the findings, in order to illustrate how the three categories are related. Pastiche is also used at the beginning of this article, using a poetic form that combined actual lyrics from several excerpts and descriptions of music taken from the corresponding variety of excerpts. I made adjustments so that the depiction made sense as a single unfolding improvisation. I added the lyric “and that makes me whole” to represent my understanding of Gloria’s experience based on my analysis of the data. Ely et al (1997) describes, “Pastiche assumes that the pieces that make up the whole communicate particular messages above and beyond the parts (p.97).

Also in this final section are specific musical elements and examples from the analysis to clarify how I utilized particular elements as therapist. At the end of the section I include some unexpected findings that emerged.

Before beginning the exploration of therapist technique, I want to reiterate that this was a collaborative process. Gloria’s willingness and ability to work on developing herself by entering into the creative process by singing was the major factor in making the music-word creations meaningful. Her desire to sing and to become more involved with music motivated her to stay immersed in the process. Her particular attributes helped to make the musical process psychologically meaningful for her. Her unique combination of skills and needs were essential factors and cannot be overlooked. Her aspiration to be a music-maker allowed her to improvise melodies and tap into her dormant strengths as a

lyricist. Her crisis became an opportunity in that her diagnosis spurred and intensified her exploration and expression in creating songs.

### How Did the Therapist Listen?

This category relates to the state I was in, the approach I took, and my preparation in approaching the potential emergence of the improvised song.

The actual improvisation process that led to the creation of the archived material under discussion was based at times on hunches, sensations, and preconscious responses. Intuition played a major role in influencing how I chose what to play and how the music ultimately developed. Brescia (2004) completed research that illuminated how music therapists experienced and utilized intuition in their clinical practice. She identified cross-case themes to relate the collective experience of the music therapists who participated in her study. The following theme expresses her findings on the use of intuition during improvisation: “When I open myself to the moment and listen deeply to the client, my intuition can guide the music that I play. The music comes from a place where I am not analyzing or organizing in a conscious way” (p.151). This is an apt description of my intuitive faculties as I approached each session.

By listening closely to Gloria’s expression, I tried to base my musical choices on what I was sensing from Gloria, what I was hearing, what intuitions I had regarding the unfolding musical process. My listening and responding emotionally allowed my music to be informed by my intuition. It is only due to this retrospective analysis that I can describe the therapeutic uses of the particular elements of music and the techniques and processes that I have uncovered regarding the music-word relationship. Many of the findings below were only tacit understandings at the time this music was created. At other times, I was aware of a particular clinical issue due to the quality of Gloria’s singing or the content of her words. Clinical interventions were embedded in the emerging musical forms I played with Gloria, so that musical goals and clinical goals overlapped.

#### *Listening with the Whole Body*

Building on Robinson’s (2005) ideas, I was prepared to be informed by my emotional responses as I listened. That meant being prepared to have emotional reactions which emerged and influenced the shape of my hands and the touch of my fingers as I played. I was prepared to be moved emotionally but not overcome by emotion. I was “poised in the creative now” (Robbins, in Turry, 1998, p.353), actively waiting and listening for the potential musical form in Gloria’s demeanor, tone of voice, content of lyric, and the rhythm of her words and/or music. Stamboliev (1992) describes the importance of the state of the therapist as he responds to the client, stating, “an alert and anticipatory relaxation is a prerequisite” (p.48). Maintaining this state allowed me to anticipate how the music would structure as a developing form. I was poised to create form as I listened, hearing the phrase structure implied by the fragment of a phrase, the meaning of a word, or a physical

gesture or motion.

A very important factor in my listening process was my physical connection to the music. I was moving and using my body to lead what I would play and how I would play it. My hands were poised to react in a gestural fashion. The shape of my hands as I listened was a result of my reaction to the content of the words or vocal quality. Varieties of hand shapes included caressing, scrunching, spreading. All of these hand movements influenced my voicing, articulation, and texture. Moving my fingers closer together or farther apart related to my visceral reaction to the material. Widening the distance between my hands to play in contrasting registers of low and high related to my body's reaction to the lyric and/or musical content. My body entered into the flow of the ongoing pulse and influenced my pedaling and articulation. All of these musical elements influenced the development of a particular musical form as it emerged. Robinson (2005) addresses the mind-body connection explicitly stating that "physiological responses to the music are in fact emotional responses" (p.373). She goes on to say that "music affects us emotionally by affecting our bodies" (p.411) and our bodies affect our emotions. By entering into the music in a physical way, I allowed myself to translate my emotional responses to Gloria's expression through my body to my hands. My body's reactions not only informed my playing, but helped me to understand Gloria's emotional process, and her emotional process informed the way I played as I responded to her through my physical sensations and actions.

### *A Balanced Listening Approach*

I often asked myself questions as I listened to seek more understanding. To balance the questioning/listening stance, I simultaneously took a stance of unconditional acceptance towards what was happening and what was going to happen. For me, this is a spiritual approach; I accepted that what is going to happen is meant to happen. I attempted to embrace the unknown, living in the now, immersed in the loving creation of the music. I tried to do this with an absolute focus of attention. The combination of listening with questions as well as an accepting attitude helped me attain this kind of listening state.

### **What Did the Therapist Listen For?**

This section includes how I listened for the content of the words to understand their meaning, and how I listened for the quality of how the words were sung. This contributed to the overall listening for the musical quality of the lyrics, the rhythm of how they were sung, the tones used, the metric implications of the words, the tempo implications based on the speed with which they were sung, and the volume of the singing. I listened for the harmonic or stylistic implication based on all of these areas.

Two tables are included in this section that illustrate what the therapist listened for. Table 2 includes perceptions of the therapist regarding Gloria's vocal quality including emotion, music, and the possible intention Gloria had when expressing herself. Table



3 includes perceptions regarding Gloria's underlying stance or persona, the form her singing took, and who she was singing to.

### *Listening for the Client's Needs*

Related to the physicality of my approach is the idea that my playing was influenced by my sense of how Gloria needed to be touched. How I touched the keys was informed by how I sensed she needed to be touched. Rather than a reassuring clasp of her hand, I would articulate my music with the same supportive energy. If I felt she needed to be soothed, my hands touched the keys informed by my assessment. If I felt she needed comforting, if she needed physical support, if she needed stirring, if she needed to move – all of these apparent physical needs influenced how I would touch the keys. This in effect influenced my articulation, dynamics, tempo, register, texture, and tonal direction. For example, when I heard Gloria softly moaning and sensed that she needed soothing, I shifted my dynamics and texture and played more delicately, with a more sparse texture rather than continue to match her dynamics, even as I continued to play with dissonant tones. My tonal choices kept the tension in the music which I felt was necessary for Gloria to continue her process, while I changed the touch of how I was playing in order to comfort her in the moment.

There are other examples when my tones reflected my sense of what Gloria needed energetically. When I sensed she needed to feel my supportive presence more directly, I played thirds moving in parallel motion to create a sense of being close to her and being present with her as she continued her process. „When I sensed Gloria needed to relax as she sang this lyric, my hands became relaxed and this changed my articulation as I played. If I sensed that Gloria needed to be awakened, I changed my touch to play with a crisper articulation. This can be heard in “*There, There*” when Gloria used a kind of numb zombie-like voice in creating despairing lyric content (“*I'm bleeding*”) and I played a cluster with a sharp attack.

### *Listening for the Message in Words and Tone*

While I listened, I sorted out the messages that I received, with the most vibrant one—a descriptive word, or a tonal direction—coming to the forefront for my response. When I heard a quality in Gloria's voice that suggested she was becoming more animated or emotional, I shifted my focus from tones to assessing what her emotional state was, and this informed the music I played. An internal dialogue took place which brought the content of the lyric, the quality of how the lyric was sung, or the musical quality of the lyric to the forefront. At times all of these components were perceived as a single entity. At other times they were perceived as separate elements. I listened for musical potentials while trying to comprehend the meaning of the lyric, and the significance of the lyric in terms of my understanding of Gloria and her challenges. I sorted out whether the lyric called for more attention or the way/the quality of how the lyric was sung the most prominent factor. Repetitive lyrics, which occurred often in the material under study allowed

me to shift from concentrating on the lyric content to the quality of how the lyric was sung.

### *Listening for Psychological Discovery*

This was an area that was made explicit during the research process as I listened recursively in the listening stance as therapist. I attempted to understand the meaning of the lyric content and its significance. I considered whether there was more that Gloria was not revealing. I tried to understand her motivations, the latent content of what she was singing, and what perspective she was utilizing as she sang. Was it the “angry critic” persona heard for instance in “*There, There?*” I considered how emotionally connected she was to the content. I wondered what the lyric content revealed about our therapeutic relationship. An important consideration was the congruence between the content of her lyric and the quality of her musical expression. I considered whether her expression was more emotionally driven or more driven by aesthetic considerations. All of these psychological considerations fed into my musical choices, sometimes consciously, more often than not unconsciously.

### *Perceiving Gloria’s Vocal Quality*

One of the areas of my listening and perception was in discerning the wide variety of emotional qualities Gloria utilized in singing. That entailed attempting to hear the quality, the underlying perspective, and the form of how she was singing.

The following categories list the different ways that I heard Gloria sing. They are not conclusions regarding what Gloria experienced, but are descriptions of what I perceived to help the reader understand my listening process.

#### Perceived Emotional Quality

Emotions could be heard in the quality of the voice as Gloria sang. Her breathing, phrasing, volume and pitch variance revealed emotional intensity. Emotion was often heard in the bending of or length of tones. At times the pitch of her tone would waver and this was an indication of strong emotion, though not always. There were times when she sang with a gradual increase of emotion as she repeated one note or one particular phrase. There were also times when her emotion fueled melodic direction and the interval between notes. There were times that as she was singing, Gloria began to cry and she stopped singing. The music I played at the piano helped her to reenter into the music. Yet reenter can be misleading because often during those times that she was crying she would be responding to the music in some way. At other times Gloria continued to sing even as she began to cry. This can be heard in several of the songs.. Though these occurred in the same way, the quality was different. In the improvised song “*Woman Why are you Weeping*” Gloria’s crying related to her resignation that she could not find her voice. In “*There, There*” her crying related to allowing her compassion towards herself to emerge.

For organizational purposes, Table 2 lists the varied emotional qualities as single occurrences. Many times there were blends of emotion in the way Robinson (2005) describes as one emotion became more prominent than another as the improvisation evolved. Even as I list them separately I acknowledge that some took place at the same time.

### Perceived Musical Quality

Gloria often sang on one tone which could be variable in terms of pitch. If she did not sing but spoke, I listened to the inflection, rhythm, and pacing of what she said, hearing it as potential music. If she sang only one tone, I listened to the length and volume as well as the implied pulse in order to form the phrase. When Gloria started to move her tones, I listened for where she was headed, listening for the next note and the implied harmony that the note implied. At times, Gloria created patterns and I anticipated what tones she would repeat or head for. At other times, my harmony led her to start and move to particular tones.

### Perceived Intention in Creating Lyric and Melody

I sensed during each of the improvisations that Gloria had a purpose. Though this purpose may not have been explicit to either of us at the time, upon reflection as it occurred or upon retrospective analysis I have been able to list the intentions that I perceived Gloria had as she created her lyrics. One of the guiding principles behind my findings was to understand her intention by closely examining what she actually did. I believe that her intentions shifted as her involvement in the music changed and her psychological defenses became less or more rigid. At times, the feelings triggered by the music may have occurred before she was ready to handle it. Often she could not start off ready to experience fully the feelings that were triggered by the musical experience. The evolution of the improvisation led her to be able to experience them. Many times the music itself became more intense as the improvisation unfolded. This was something I tried to gauge and respond to, sometimes with explicit changes in the music, but mostly with an implicit reaction based on my intuition at the time.

Table 2: How the Therapist Listened: Perceptions regarding Client's Vocal Quality\*

Emotional Quality	Musical Quality	The Intention Perceived by the Therapist
Disdainful	Monotone	To experience feelings that are not present
Hopeful	Speaking voice with inflection	To establish a melody that has words
Fearful	One tone that is fluid	To lessen present painful feelings
Disbelieving	One tone that is solid	To avoid feelings that may surface
Desperate	One tone that is repeating	To question whether the content is true

Contrasting earlier emotion	Moving tones	To question the impact of the content
Nurturing	Moving tones in relation to the harmony	To convince herself that the content is true
Searching	Moving tones implying a new harmony	To feel playful
Enthusiastic	Singing a new tone in response to a new harmony	To resolve a conflict
Desiring	Creating a brief melodic statement	To debate contrasting positions
Yearning	Responding to her previous melodic statement to create a longer melodic phrase	To find an answer to a question
Wishing that the experience would last longer than it will	Creating a melodic idea	To understand a diffuse feeling
Mournful	Repeating a previous melodic idea	To be heard
Forgiving	Creating a melodic sequence	
Ironic	Searching for a new tone	
Mocking	Searching for tones that help to convey the intention of her lyric	
Sad	Searching for a tone or phrase that will complete the musical phrase/experience	
Assertive	Rhythmic	
Angry	Holding one tone for an entire breath	
Congruent	Implying a musical style (bluesy, operatic)	
Incongruent	Head voice	
Bubbly	Chest voice	
Silly	Weak breath support	
	Strong breath support	
	Close to whispering	
	Close to screaming	
	Narrow tone	
	Open tone	
	Sharp	
	Flat	
	Wavering	
	Precisely on pitch	

\*the columns of this table are not linked

### Perceived Underlying Stance of the Client: Personae

Gloria could use the same phrase, intervallic distance and direction yet create a different emotional quality in her melody depending on how she was singing, from what perspective she was singing from, or to whom she seemed to be singing to. For instance, there were times when she was singing about her father and her entire demeanor changed such that she sounded like a child. At other times, she might sound as if she was singing from the perspective of a wise and knowing persona, particularly when she sang from God's perspective. Sometimes the content of her lyrics and the emotional quality of how she sang them were congruent as I heard them. At other times they seemed to combine to create a more complex quality, and at times they were in opposition, creating a paradoxical quality. "*There, There*" contains examples of these qualities.

Gloria's immersion in music produced a very fluid mental and emotional state in which she was able to evoke and give voice to different – sometimes contrasting – self-personifications. Just as different characters may emerge in dreams, all of whom are ultimately recognized as representing elements of the attitudes, feelings, and character of one dreamer, so Gloria gave musical expression to different internal aspects and perspectives that I came to call "personae." These personae were musically distinct, and appeared to arise from deep-seated personality traits, articulating long-held underlying stances relating to issues, situations, and personalities. In her state of musical involvement, she was able to access several different personae as she sang, moving from one to another during the course of a single improvisation. A vivid example of this process is heard in "*There, There*."

The significance of these personae, their emergence in conjunction with the music being created, and their reciprocal influence on subsequent shifts and changes during the course of an improvisation will be discussed in the next section.

### *Musical Forms*

The musical form Gloria utilized was related to the emotional quality of how she sang and the persona that Gloria tapped into as she sang. Many times this was associated with the actual content of the lyrics. For instance, she could sing about God in a chant like prayer form, or sing about God in a blues style. She often had dialogues with herself and this fueled her to continue her process when it became difficult. The dialogue form was one she utilized particularly when she hesitated and the music from the piano encouraged her to continue.

Gloria had a wide variety of resources to tap into. She was familiar with many of the classic operas and often referenced storylines from particular ones that moved her. She knew the Bible very well and at times in the session recalled specific sentences from the Bible and sang them with her own original melodies. Her connection to religion and her experiences with music from church contributed to the forms she created in the session. Her prayer-like singing often had a chant-like quality, particularly when her melody repeated a single tone.

Gloria had an eclectic music collection including recordings of jazz vocalists and classical singers as well. This was a collection that she intrinsically tapped into during this creative process. She did not bring in specific melodies, but she might snap her fingers and move in a way that suggested a particular musical form.

Gloria often had a conversation with herself, asking a question through a melody and lyric and then searching for an answer. This is heard in “*There, There*.” Her lyrics and melody also unfolded as if she was telling a story. Gloria developed confidence in searching for and finding the particular form she needed as she created her ideas, and this helped her to keep going even when the material she was singing about was difficult and challenging.

The song form itself functioned to anchor a new emotion or attitude, support it, reinforce it, establish it, and bring it to fruition. At other times the song worked as a vehicle to bring various polarities together, holding together seemingly paradoxical qualities and combining them to enhance the overall quality.

### *Who was Gloria Singing To?*

Gloria often sang to sing, not to sing to a particular person either in her present or past. But as her investment in the music became more complete and her personae started to emerge, it would seem as if she was singing to a particular audience or person. At times, it was just a general group of people from whom she might want approval. This would occur when she might be stating her case and waiting for judgment. So in a way she was testifying for a jury. At other times, she seemed to be singing to God or trying to capture God’s perspective.

Of course, since I was always present as Gloria sang and listened to what she sang, it could be argued that everything Gloria sang she sang to me, or for me to hear, or had to do with the dynamics of our relationship. This was something I regularly considered when listening to her music. Many times I sensed that she was singing to me, to herself, and to another unseen person. In this way, there was a blending of who Gloria was singing to. Gloria often felt bolstered when she felt that I was listening to the content and formulating the same questions and reactions that she was. At times, she would ask a question to herself and then look at me and ask if I also wanted to know the answer. It was a way for her to validate her direction and reassure herself that I was with her in her unfolding process. Usually she heard my response in the music itself and this was enough for her to continue.

Table 3: How the Therapist Listened: Perceptions regarding Stance, Form and Direction\*

Gloria’s Underlying Stance (Persona)	Form of Gloria’s Singing	Who was Gloria Singing To
The Playful Child	Prayer	To an unseen audience
The Vulnerable Child	Hymn	To her father

The Wounded Child		Dialogue		To the therapist
The Playful Woman		Statement		To herself
The Inner Critic		Plea		To God
The Faithful Disciple		Conversation		From God's perspective to herself
The Sympathetic Judge		Soliloquy		To her mother
The Sarcastic Adult		Performance		To a particular persona she created and then to another to take different perspectives within the same improvisation
The Vengeful Judge		Story Telling		
The Frightened Child				
The Wise Guide				
The Hopeful Child				

\*the columns in this table are not linked

### How Did the Therapist Respond?

This section focuses on what I actually did musically. To illustrate the connections between how I listened, what I listened for and how I responded, I have created a pastiche. The structural outline of the pastiche depicts an improvised song as it emerges, establishes, and comes to completion, and cites particular examples where these developments can be found in the archived material.

*How did the Therapist listen? What Did the Therapist Listen For?  
How Did The Therapist Respond?*

I listened for the shape and quality of Gloria's breathing to inform the development of my music.

*The process begins. Sensing the energy.*

I listened for any cues or sounds that imply a rhythmic form or tone in order to inform the development of my music.

*Simultaneous shaping as my music influences the sounds that Gloria is making. This can come from her series of moans that determine the pulse or a verbal statement that has an implied melodic and rhythmic contour which I play.*

I listened for the pitch of the tone Gloria is singing and the harmonic im-

plications of the emerging melody.

*The potential for an improvised song emerges. I can choose to determine a tonal center and overall tonality or keep the tonal organization more ambiguous, depending on what I sense Gloria needs and/or what the music needs.*

I listened for the quality of Gloria's tone—strong or weak, detached or connected, thin or thick, soft or hard, hollow or full—and the content of the lyric in order to determine the emotional quality of my music.

*The tensions and resolutions of the music determine the emotional quality. How I play—touch volume and tempo—and what I play—consonance or dissonance—contributes to the qualities in my music and the overall music that Gloria and I are creating together. Her vocal quality influences my choices. The mood of the music emerges.*

I listened for the quality of Gloria's tone and the content of the lyric in order to form the structure and style of the music.

*Organum structure combined with dissonance to match Gloria's religious contemplation and sadness?*

*A blues with a swing feel implied by her sliding tone?*

*The Lydian mode to encourage more imagery?*

*The Dorian mode to convey warmth and tension in response to her turmoil?*

I listened for the volume of Gloria's tone and the content of the lyric in order to determine the volume, register and texture of my music.

*Setting the stage for mutuality by making sure we both can be heard*

I listened for the pulse and phrasing of Gloria's expression in order to determine the tempo and metric implications of our music.

*Sharing in the development of tempo and how it changes, stops and starts again is an important component to making the experience a shared, co-active one. It also helps to organize the different sections within the overall song form.*

I listened for the rhythm of Gloria's melody and how she phrased it in order to form a bar structure that allowed the two of us to create with a sense of the ongoing structure of the music with regard to measures and sections of the music

*Creating a meter and measures are key factors in creating forward momentum and shaping the structure of the improvisation into a song form.*

I listened for the harmonic implications of Gloria's emerging melody not only to place her current note within a harmony but to anticipate what the next harmony could be. This determined not only the changing chords as a whole but how the tones within each chord could change.



*The more harmonic options I can hear the more I can choose from. The more choices I have, the more options I have to make musical choices that have clinical intention. Will it be major or minor, or a chord with more ambiguity? Inversion or root position? Closed or open voicings?*

I listened for the potential motion of Gloria's melody and the lyric content to determine the motion of my harmonic progression

*If Gloria is singing one tone, I can create harmonic motion in ways to move the song form forward. It can be the bass tone, an inner voice of the chord, or the chord as a whole. If Gloria is singing a sequence, I can anticipate the next set of tones and the implications for the harmonic progression become clear.*

I listened for the notes of Gloria's melody to determine the mode or scale she is utilizing and the implications for my harmonic choices.

*If she is singing tones of the pentatonic, I have many options with regard to harmonic accompaniment. I can stay in the pentatonic, choose a mode, create a diatonic progression, since all of these contain the notes of the pentatonic. I can choose to play tones in contrast to the tones of her melody. Discerning her tones is not a conscious determination but a response by ear to what I am hearing.*

I listened for both the melodic rhythm and the lyric content in order to shape a potential countermelody.

*My musical commentary often comes directly from my melodic rhythm. The rhythm often is the same as a lyric that Gloria has just sung, or an answering lyric that I hold in my thoughts while playing. My melodic rhythm often has an interval that moves in parallel motion. The parallel motion makes the melodic rhythm more noticeable, and the relationship between the tones of the interval can reveal some aspect of the relationship between Gloria and me.*

I listened for the relationship between the meaning of the words and Gloria's current quality of musical expression in order to develop clinical context and direction.

*When she is unable to deal with the emotions related to the lyric content, what can I do with my music to help her? Infuse the music with dissonance and dynamics? Change my touch to trigger a shift in her perspective?*

I listened for the emerging meaning of the words in relation to the client's general issues and development. How did what she sang fit into my understanding of what her current issues were?

*Is there a kind of music or musical quality from our past collaborations that could help now?*

I listened for clues in developing an understanding of the perspective Gloria was taking

*When she sings from the persona of “the wounded child” I often play soft arpeggiated minor music in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time in a high register to both manifest the persona and comfort Gloria. “The critic” usually gets low pitches with angular intervals and a harsh articulation, which can lead to earthy music and a way to transform the energy of the persona that Gloria is living in. Sometimes my music leads to the development of the persona, sometimes the persona leads to the development of my music, and sometimes the music and the persona emerge together.*

I listened to the melody and lyrics in order to determine whether to match it, enhance it, create music that depicted the imagery of the lyric, or respond and musically comment on the lyric with my own melody.

*This is a process that could be based on my musical countertransference, on purely musical considerations and or specific clinical intentions, or a combination of all of these. I may react to a word or words that Gloria sings and respond to it, or try and create a musical description of it. Intuition plays a part in my musical choices.*

I listened for the relationship between Gloria’s pitch and the pitch of the piano.

*As Gloria’s pitch places in between two notes that are a half step apart, I can play both of those notes and accentuate the tension of being “out of tune.” Bringing out these tones can help in moving Gloria’s psychological process forward by helping her live in the tension of the interval and utilize the tension to go on, and at the same time help her to become grounded in the musical experience by choosing one or the other of the tones to sing.*

I listened for the emotional expression or dynamic intensity Gloria was utilizing in singing lyrics

*This plays an important part in determining the third of a harmony that I play—whether it is major and minor, or left out completely—and the tones included in the harmony—tritones, sixths, sevenths, ninths, elevenths, thirteenth, that together determine the emotional color of a harmony.*

I listened for Gloria’s shifting emotional state to determine how much support to provide in the music

*Creating a definitive tonal center helps to provide organization and safety. Singing with her is a way to provide support more directly. She feels the sound of my presence as we have a defined melody and lyric to join in together.*

I listened for the quality of the words and music and the form of the song

to determine when to end

*A sense of wholeness and completeness often accompanies the ending of an improvised song. Sometimes bringing the music to a close allows for a new perspective and a continuation of some kind in a new musical form. This depends in part on when the song is occurring within the overall session.*

### *Embracing Tensions: Creating Blends of Qualities*

During moments of lyrical content describing hopeless imagery or during moments where Gloria's vocal expression revealed turmoil or conflict, the music that I played at the piano included the melody notes and melodic phrase of the lyric statement. This music that held a quality of turmoil or tension was then combined with harmony and a harmonic rhythm that sounds like a beginning, an introduction, or an opening to a new song form and creates a strong sense that the music could continue. This could happen by changing the key or by creating a progression that sounded as if leading to a new key. One common harmonic device I used in creating a sense of beginning was to play a suspended dominant seventh chord and then play a second inversion chord built on the same bass tone in order to establish a new key and a song form beginning.

A<sup>b</sup>sus                  D<sup>b</sup>/A<sup>b</sup>

So with this combination of past qualities and current qualities there was forward momentum to continue in the musical experience. Through the use of dissonance coupled with Gloria's original melodic expression of her turmoil, the music from the piano maintained some quality of the tension that was expressed previously. This was a way that musical elements combined to create the emotional qualities of turmoil and hopefulness at the same time. There was hope for a new direction and a resolution in the music even as the music continued to acknowledge the turmoil. When Gloria reentered the collaboration, and suggested a possible more hopeful lyric, the music offered the experience of less tension, of resolution.

### *Unexpected Discoveries*

I had thought that I would find a developmental process through the period under study for Gloria in creating melodies. I had held the idea that as she became less constricted psychologically, her melodies would become more expansive. What I found was that even early on in the process Gloria was moving from her single tone melodies and creating melodies that were wider in terms of tonal range. What did change were her intervallic paths. She became more able to skip, leap, and change direction. Also what changed and developed through time was Gloria's vocal quality with regards to flow of breath support and accuracy of pitch. Her quality became more robust and her sound more sustained. Another development during the period under study was her precision and accuracy of pitch. In general there was less sliding into notes.

Another surprise was how the vocal quality of Gloria changed and how that played upon my response. In listening to the archived material I realized how her constriction and the tension in her voice played a part in my emotional response to the material. Early on, I played with more pedal, used more arpeggiation and legato, and this was done in part in response to Gloria's overall vocal quality. It was a way to soothe and relax her and me as well. As I listened to the archived material created later in the process, I noticed a slight reduction in the use of the pedal on my part and in the amount of notes used in arpeggiation.

I was surprised at the blends of emotional qualities I found when I listened. During the sessions, I had a sense that a particular mood or quality was at the forefront. But as the analysis unfolded I could hear several blends of emotional qualities as they emerged, shifted, transformed, and combined. There were times when Gloria's exasperation or even desperation as she sang also contained elements of insistence and assertiveness that gave her the energy to continue even during moments where the lyric content suggested she was giving up. She attributed her ability to continue during those moments to listening to the continuing music. In retrospect, it may have been that the music accessed those parts of her that were barely present, incipient, but that could come to the forefront when the music could support them.

I was surprised when I learned who initiated a particular musical idea. Closer and repeated listening triggered new understandings as to how things emerged. Whereas previously I thought I began something, it was really based on something that happened much earlier in the improvisation; things I attributed to Gloria were things she was actually responding to that I had already done. "I had thought that the first time I played the tritone was in response to Gloria's lyric "*everything's fine*." I discovered that I had actually played it in the harmony earlier, and this was heard by Gloria and influenced the way she stated her lyric, which then influenced my playing the tritone as a countermelody. Rather than the tritone being an isolated response to a particular quality in Gloria's lyric statement, it was already present in the music, although not as apparent as it would eventually become.

I was surprised to discover a harmonic relationship between "*There, There*," and another improvised song under study "*Do I Dare Imagine?*" In both examples, there is a

harmonic shift during the improvisation from Bb minor to Db major. In “*There, There,*” this occurs from section to section, when the music shifts from the main lyric theme “*There, There*” which is in Bb minor, to the gospel section, which moves to Db major, an uplifting key change that fuses with the uplifting style of music. In “*Do I Dare Imagine?*” the shift between Bb minor and Db major occurs within a section in which Gloria was singing about a psychological struggle she was having. The fact that both improvisations had the same harmonies probably had more to do with Gloria’s vocal range than my personal musical tendencies, as these were not keys I found myself improvising in often.

## CONCLUSION

The songs improvised in music psychotherapy are not merely musical creations; they are musical/psychological creations that emanate from and are intimately connected to the client’s intrapsychic states. Music combined with words and given form and structure in the improvisational process has a special ability to evoke the emergence, and subsequent integration and transformation of, different parts of the self—different contrasting personae—that live within the individual. Because of the qualities that music holds it can make this happen in a smooth, seamless and connected fashion.

In fusing words and music, creating melody and lyrics, a coordination takes place that enables the client to think, describe, and express both emotionally and intellectually. The client can think and feel fully during moments of the improvisation by tapping into previously dormant potentials to connect thought with feeling, music with words. The implication from this study is that this ability to express by fusing words and music, to integrate thought and feeling is not an ability that one consciously practices. Rather, it arises spontaneously with the deep immersion into the experience. The flow and form of the music, the dynamic forces inherent in the music, are vital forces in allowing this to happen.

The process of creating an improvised song allows the client in music psychotherapy not only to express in a way that integrates thoughts and emotions; it allows the client to try on a psychological attitude that would not be possible without the musical experience. The music of the therapist provides the safe environment to encourage risk-taking and suggests the direction and quality of the risk. The path of the unfolding music can suggest entering into challenge or taking on a helpful quality like strength or courage. Because music contains blends of qualities, the music can have both the emotional qualities that the client is experiencing and the emotional qualities that the client is seeking. The fact that the client is not merely passively listening, but actively creating makes the experience more related to core personality constructs and thus the potential for more lasting psychological change is possible. The client can experience a sense of initiative even while the therapist makes a significant contribution to the immediate emotional tone and the future musical development of the song by shaping the musical elements.

By improvising songs the music psychotherapist can work to bring out personae that are in contrast to each other in order to facilitate dialogue and integration of those personae. Clients who are drawn to music therapy and have issues regarding self-criticism and overbearing judgment can become engaged successfully in music psychotherapy because they have a sense that they can be more spontaneous and playful. There can be a positive relationship that people hold with regard to musical expression, particularly when the client is not a trained musician. Yet the issues regarding self criticism can arise even within musical interaction for the non musician because music is so closely related to the core of the person. Combining music and words is an ideal vehicle to work on bringing a playful and creative attitude to long-held critical positions within the client.

Zuckermandl (1973) theorized that the act of singing was “an enhancement of the self” (p.23) that breaks down the separation between subject and object. Words that are sung “build a living bridge” (p.29) between the singer and the topic being sung about. In this way, the singer can “without losing his[her] identity, be with what he[she] is not” (p.30). Rather than singing to communicate to others, the singer is singing to become more vital, to become more connected to the subject of the song. Here, Gloria breaks down the separation between her various selves to enhance her overall self. She seeks to be with the consoling and accepting qualities she often cannot be with in everyday life.

## REFERENCES

- Aigen, K. (1995). The aesthetic foundation of clinical theory: A basis of Nordoff-Robbins music therapy. In C. B. Kenny (Ed.), *Listening, playing, creating: Essays on the power of sound* (pp.233–257). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Aigen, K. (1996). Response to Gary Ansdell’s book *Music for Life*. *The International Association of Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapists Newsletter*.
- Aigen, K. (1996). The role of values in qualitative music therapy research. In M. Langenberg, K. Aigen & J. Frommer (Eds.), *Qualitative music therapy research: Beginning Dialogues* (pp.9–33). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Aigen, K. (2005). *Music-Centered Music Therapy*. Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Aldridge, D. (1991). Physiological change, communication and the playing of improvised music. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 18, 59–64.
- Amir, D. (1990). A song is born: Discovering meaning in improvised songs through a phenomenological analysis of two music therapy sessions with a traumatic spinal cord injured adult. *Music Therapy*, 9(1), 62–81.
- Ansdell, G. (1995). *Music for life: Aspects of creative music therapy with adult clients*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Austin, D. (1996). The role of improvisational music in psychodynamic music therapy with adults. *Music Therapy*, 14(1), 29–43.
- Austin, D. (1999a). Many stories, many songs. In J. Hibben (Ed.), *Inside music therapy: Client experiences* (pp.119–128). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.

- Austin, D. (1999b). Vocal Improvisation in analytically oriented music therapy with adults. In T. Wigram & J. De Backer (Eds.), *Clinical applications of music therapy in psychiatry* (pp.141–157). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Austin, D. (2001). In search of the self: The use of vocal holding techniques with adults traumatized as children. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 19(1), 22–30.
- Austin, D. (2002). The voice of trauma: A wounded healers perspective. In J. Sutton (Ed.), *Music, music therapy and trauma: International perspectives* (pp.231–259). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Austin, D. (2004). *When words sing and music speaks: A Qualitative study of in depth music psychotherapy with adults*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York.
- Austin, D. and Forinash, M. (2005). Arts Based Research. In B. L. Wheeler, *Music Therapy Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.458–471). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Bonde, L.O. (2005). Approaches to researching music. In B. L. Wheeler, *Music Therapy Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.526–540). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Brescia, T. (2004). *A qualitative study of Intuition as Experienced and used by music therapists*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York.
- Brown, S. & Pavlicevic, M. (1996). Clinical improvisation in creative music therapy: Musical aesthetic and the interpersonal dimension. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 23, 397–406.
- Bruscia, K. E. (1987). *Improvisational models of music therapy*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Bruscia, K.E. (1998). *Defining music therapy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Cooke, D. (1959). *The language of music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D., & McCormack Steinmetz, A. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M. & Anzul, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Etkin, P. (1999). The use of creative improvisation and psychodynamic insights in music therapy with an abused child. In T. Wigram & J. De Backer (Eds.), *Clinical applications of music therapy in developmental disability, paediatrics and neurology* (pp.155–165). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Fidelibus, J. (2004). *Mindfulness in music therapy clinical improvisation: When the music flows*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York.
- Forinash, M. (1992). A phenomenological analysis of the Nordoff-Robbins approach to music therapy: The lived experience of clinical improvisation. *Music Therapy*, 11(1), 120–143.
- Hesser, B. (2002). *An evolving theory of music therapy*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Hesser, B. (2002). *Music psychotherapy*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Keith, D. (2005). *Understanding music improvisations: A comparison of methods of meaning-making*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Temple University, Philadelphia.

- Lee, C. (1989). Structural analysis of therapeutic improvisatory music. *Journal of British Music Therapy*, 3(2), 11–19.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Magill Bailey, L. (1984). The use of songs in music therapy with cancer patients and their families. *Music Therapy*, 4(1), 5–17.
- Nathanson, D. (1992). *Shame and pride: Affect, sex, and the birth of the self*. New York: Norton and Company.
- Natterson, I. (1993, Spring). Turning points and intersubjectivity. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 21, 45–53.
- Nordoff, P. & Robbins, C. (1971). *Therapy in music for handicapped children* (2nd ed.). London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Nordoff, P. & Robbins, C. (1977). *Creative music therapy*. Gilsum, NH. Barcelona Publishers.
- Pavlicevic, M. (1999). Thoughts, words and deeds: Harmonies and counterpoint in music therapy theory: A response to Elaine Streeter's 'Finding a balance between psychological thinking and musical awareness in music therapy theory: A psychoanalytical perspective.' *British Journal of Music Therapy*, 13(2), 59–62.
- Robarts, J. (2003). The healing function of improvised songs in music therapy with a child survivor of early trauma and sexual abuse. In S. Hadley (Ed.), *Psychodynamic music therapy: Case studies*. Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Robinson, J. (2005). *Deeper than reason: Emotion and its role in literature, music, and art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smeijsters, H. (2005). *Sounding the self: Analogy in improvisational music therapy*. Gilsum NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Sorel, S. N. (2005). Presenting Carly and Elliot: Exploring roles and relationships in a mother-son dyad in Nordoff-Robbins music therapy. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York University, NY.
- Stamboliev, R. (1992). *The energetics of voice dialogue*. Mendocino, California: Life Rhythm.
- Stone, H. & Stone, S. (1989). *Embracing our selves: The voice dialogue manual*. Novato California: New World Library
- Turry, A. (1998). Transference and countertransference in Nordoff-Robbins music therapy. In K. E. Bruscia (Ed.), *The dynamics of music psychotherapy*, (pp.161–212). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Turry, A. (2002). Don't let the fear prevent the grief: Working with traumatic reactions through improvisation. In J. Loewy & A. Frisch Hara (Eds.), *Caring for the caregiver: The use of music and music therapy in grief and trauma*, (pp.44–53). Silver Springs, MD: American Music Therapy Association.
- Turry, A. & Marcus, D. (2003). Using the Nordoff-Robbins approach to music therapy with adults diagnosed with autism. In D. Weiner, D & L. Oxford (Eds.), *Action therapy with families and groups: Using creative arts improvisation in clinical practice* (pp.197–228). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.



- Turry, A., & Turry, A. E. (1999). The use of improvised songs with children and adults with cancer. In C. Dileo (Ed.), *Music therapy and medicine* (pp.167–178). Silver Spring, MD: American Music Therapy Association.
- Zuckermandl, V. (1973). *Man the musician: Sound and symbol* (Vol. 2). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.