

NEWS

MUSIC MAY BE THE KEY TO LIFE FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH ANOREXIA NERVOSA

At City University's Department of Music, home to the UK's only music therapy research fellowship, Jacqueline Robarts is researching how patients with the eating disorder anorexia nervosa can learn to assert themselves through music, and how this leads to an improved sense of self and enjoyment of life.

Expression of anger and self-assertiveness can mark a vital turning point in recovery from an illness that can be fatal to as many as 10 per cent of sufferers.

"Anorexia is a most complex illness which is deeply involved with people's

feelings of self," says Jacqueline Robarts.

The music therapist can help anorexic clients to develop more authentic and spontaneous communication, with a more natural flow of emotion and self-expression.

"Music is our first language," says Jacqueline Robarts. "Tone, loudness or rhythm are all part of how we express feelings. A change in tone of voice is an example. As babies, we relate to changes in our parents' voices long before we understand the meaning of words."

In a music therapy session, a client will improvise on a piano, drums or other

instruments. The rhythm, tone, pace or style of the music can communicate what the client may be unable or unwilling to express in words.

The therapist may notice that a client shows undue hesitation. Or the music may be fragmented or rigid – anorexic clients are often tightly controlled or passionless in their playing. Patterns of clients' relationships in ordinary life also emerge as the therapist joins in the music – helping to develop a musical dialogue with the client.

In this process, the therapist has to decide how best to respond to assist the client in recovery.

When is it helpful to allow silence and long pauses? To what extent should the therapist echo the patterns and sounds of the client? How will the client respond to intensity?

Jacqueline Robarts' three-year research fellowship, funded by the Music Therapy Charity and Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre, provides an opportunity to explore these issues. In the study, she will work with 12 teenagers at the new St George's Eating Disorders Service, based at Springfield University Hospital in south-west London. She will use a digital piano, lent by Roland UK, and computerised technology to measure the assertiveness of their music making.

Recovery includes not only the ability to maintain a healthy weight but also to make choices less driven by clients' illness and to express their feelings spontaneously.

City University has been validating post-graduate courses in music therapy at Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre since 1983. Music therapy is also one of the optional subjects available to the university's music students.

The Musicians' Funding A Future initiative specifically aims to help professional musicians wishing to train as music therapists.

COURT STRUCTURE

In the previous issue, reference was made to the desire to appoint at least one new Court member every year. Following the ballot at the July Court, Leslie Charles East was elected from a shortlist of four to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Pastmaster Malcolm Hubble, who while Master encouraged the creation of *Preserve Harmony*, and who now becomes an honorary member of the Court.

Arrangements have also been finalised to implement the procedure for the new Steward appointments, the prime objective of these one-year periods of office being to enable additional members of the Company to obtain more detailed background to how the Company operates and to provide a greater sense of participation.

Stewards will be able to attend all Court meetings, and subject to the normal

discipline of the Chair will be permitted to join discussions, but will have no Court vote. They are, however, not entitled to participate or to be present at any discussions related to Court candidature or any elections concerning officers of the Company.

Among other duties, Stewards will be required to attend the two annual Court dinners and to be present to support the Master at any formal function involving public procession where the Company Banner is displayed. Blue academic gowns are being provided by the Company together with other formal regalia.

The following liverymen have been elected for the period commencing with the October Court meeting: Paul William Philip Champion; Petronella Elizabeth Kendrick Dittmer; Peter Albert Fowler; and Andrew William Morris.

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says Lockett. "The plusses include the fact that, as a farmer, I have control over the place and can put up a theatre, build a car park in a field and so on, if I want to. The neighbours are not really near enough to be able to complain, and we have a 365-day theatre licence. The minus is that we're not on a public transport system. People have to have a car to get to us.

"Our audiences tend now to be a mixture of the people who would go, for instance, to opera at the Royal Northern College of Music, and country-based people who want to be entertained by easily digested music.

"I'm very happy with the idea of 'The Glyndebourne of the North', and I just hope that it doesn't annoy the Christies.

We take our inspiration from people like them, though we're much more rustic and homely a set-up."

Jeffery Lockett's property now consists of an amalgamation of four farms, and many of the young singers for each "Clonter Opera Studio" stay either in the Locketts' house or the other buildings. He explains: "We try to avoid anyone having to share a room, but there are some communal facilities. They get their own breakfasts from the provisions in the fridges, and we give them their lunches and suppers here at the farm. We have a very long, hard working day, and there's not much to do outside, apart from going to the pub. It can be a bit of a shock.

"Anita and I have to be substitute parents, sometimes. We invite people in for a cup of

tea, and the staff often stay here as part of our family. We eat together, suffer bits of temperament together, and endure problems, colds, disagreements and so on, together.

"We just want to provide an opportunity for emerging artists, at a time when they're going from a small pond to a bigger one, to work with staff of the highest calibre in a way that enables them to get to know the repertoire, and themselves as artists, a little bit better. We hope it's supplementary to anything they may have learned at the conservatoires, and that it provides an opportunity to perform a role, in front of a paying audience, which is less frightening than being in a large theatre."

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