

MUSIC THERAPY AND SEVERE MENTAL DISORDER: AN INTERVENTION PROPOSAL IN CRPS ARGÁ



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Abstract

Music therapy has a favourable effect on people suffering from mental disorders, providing benefits in areas such as self-esteem, self-realization and self-image, which are fundamental aspects of improving social skills and interpersonal relationships and will facilitate the process of social integration. It is important to work with this population and even more important to carry it out within a community context. After a bibliographic review and improved knowledge of the characteristics of this population, an intervention is proposed in the Arga Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center (CRPS Argá) in the San Juan/Donibane neighbourhood (Pamplona). The main objective is the integration of these people into the community life of the neighbourhood, carrying out activities ranging from the most internal work, with the users in the centre itself, to external work, with a musical group formed by neighbours, to finally become an active part of the festive events and the social life of the neighbourhood. The evaluation was carried out using a record sheet and a Likert-type scale questionnaire. It can be affirmed that the development of the project contains all the necessary elements that will allow the execution of the proposed intervention.

Keywords: music therapy, severe mental disorder, mental health, schizophrenia, psychosocial intervention.

BACKGROUND

This article presents a proposal for a music therapy intervention in the socio-health field, focused on community work. It is aimed at a group of 8 adults suffering from serious mental disorders, users of the Arga Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre in the Donibane-San Juan neighbourhood (Pamplona, Navarra).

The music therapy intervention is based on carrying out a series of activities aimed at facilitating the relationship and interaction between the people in the group and ultimately promoting the acquisition of the necessary personal and social skills. This will improve or facilitate their entry into the community through subsequent active participation in the musical group (fanfare). Fanfanxar already exists in the neighbourhood.

One of the great difficulties encountered by this population is adapting to "normal" life in their neighbourhood or community, as they lack the social and personal skills to do so. In this sense, several studies show the effectiveness of music therapy in providing this population with resources and social skills, thus favouring socialization and social integration.

Severe Mental Disorder and its main characteristics

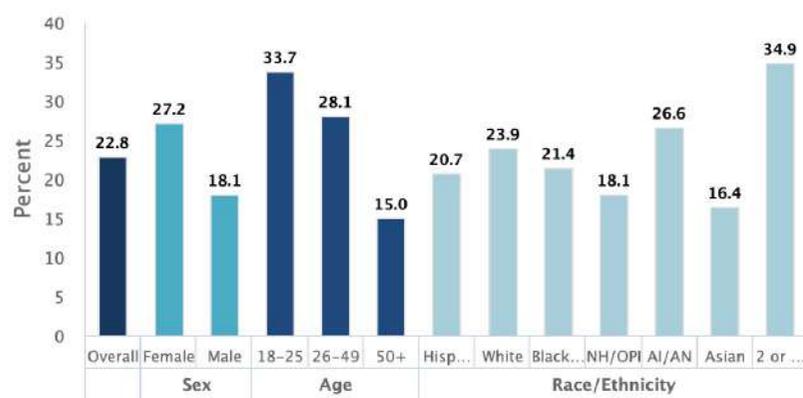
Severe Mental Disorder (SMD) can be defined based on three areas:

- the severity of the diagnosis, referring to psychotic disorders and some personality disorders
- the duration of the illness and the treatment itself, which exceeds two years
- the presence of a disability that affects all areas of life (social, work, family)

Figure 1 shows the prevalence according to data from the American SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Figure 1

Prevalence of mental illness in adults (USA)



Note: People of Hispanic origin can be of various races; other races/ethnic groups are non-Hispanic. NH/OPI = Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders | AI/AN = American Indian / Alaska Native. Taken from: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

Although each person is unique and the disease affects each one differently, this population has some common characteristics, among others:

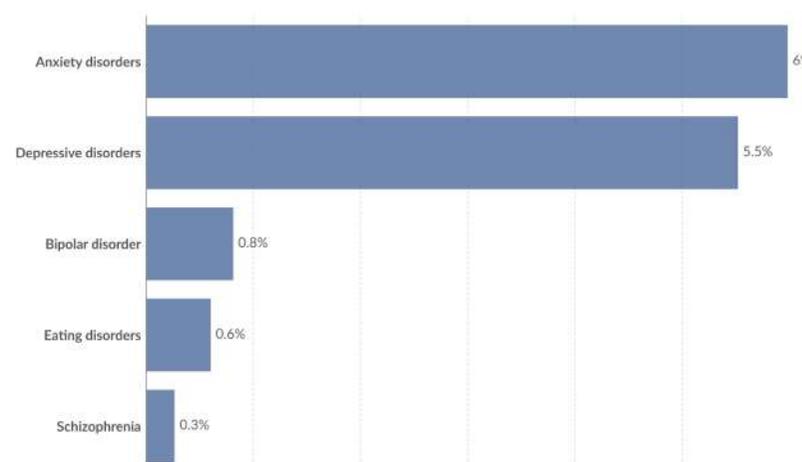
- Gaps in social skills and abilities
- Vulnerability to stress
- Little autonomy or dependence on other people and services
- Difficulty in accessing the world of work
- Alteration in behaviour

The prevalence in Spain, with data from 2021 (see Fig. 2), offers us a picture clearly marked by the problems derived from anxiety and depression. All this means, in short,

an isolation or distancing from the social environment, caused by the disease itself but also by the social stigma that exists towards these people.

Figure 2

Prevalence of mental health in Spain (2021)



Note: The estimated proportion of people with each mental illness in a given year, regardless of whether they have been diagnosed or not. Based on representative surveys, medical data, and statistical models. Taken from: Dattani, Rodés-Guirao, Ritchie & Roser (2023).

However, not everything is the result of the disease itself. Various factors influence this aspect, and they have to do with the characteristics of the people and the support they have; social isolation is also determined by the lack of community support. The lack of social interrelations and the lack of personal skills prevent the support network and access to resources.

The Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centers - CRPS Arga

These centres are outpatient community resources that aim to help people recover social and personal autonomy and promote and maintain their integration into the community. To do this, the proposed activities must have an external projection and be integrated into the community.

CRPS Arga, located in the San Juan/Donibane neighbourhood, not only conducts activities within the centre itself but also in the community environment, together with other associations and entities in the neighbourhood.

The centre offers 75 places aimed at the population of Pamplona and its region. It is divided into two major programmes: a Day Centre for people with very significant

personal and functional deterioration where basic aspects of care are worked on, and a Rehabilitation Centre, which aims to recover the person by achieving maximum integration.

Treatment plans are established in agreement with the person and the family with dynamic and realistic objectives. The work takes place over two years.

The staff of this centre includes the director-psychologist, a social worker, an occupational therapist, two job trainers, four educators, and administrative and cleaning people.

As mentioned in previous lines, multidisciplinary activities are developed both in the centre itself and in community environments: the wool workshop in the San Juan Xar Neighborhood Association, participation in the neighbourhood's urban gardens, activities with animals on farms, badge workshop with the neighbourhood's child and youth population, etc.

The importance of community work

Offering community leisure and leisure activities is essential for good clinical practice, especially when dealing with people with deficiencies in social relationships. These people are part of the community, so interventions aimed at this population must pay special attention to this aspect and seek to promote integration in the community in which they work.

Users with SMD have a very deficient area of interpersonal relationships and social integration. The concept of themselves (self-concept) that they have induces them to marginalize themselves, which we can call "self-stigma". Added to this is the rejection that society generates towards these people because it considers them different and often dangerous, which we call "social stigma".

Working at the community level is understood as one of the most effective tools for breaking down the barriers of stigma in both directions.

Music Therapy and Severe Mental Disorder

Music therapy is a profession that requires knowledge of psychology, psychotherapy, and music. It is not a question of adding music to psychological treatment; The characterization of this therapy is that the therapeutic instrument is, in itself, music.

This discipline varies depending on the people and their circumstances. In this way, applied to people with more

serious mental illnesses, which entail greater mental disorganization, it requires a different type of intervention than those who maintain greater mental organization. In the case of SMT, the most appropriate modality would be music therapy as activity therapy (Pokharel, 2021; Tang et al. 2020; Wang & Agius, 2018).

It is clear that the music therapist does not randomly decide which technique to use but bases the decision on the understanding of what is happening to the sick person and what he or she needs. We must know their needs and their responses to music in order to direct the sessions. In this sense, and the case of people with SMI, the way music is produced is closely related to the pathology they present. Different projects compiled in a publication by Sabbatella (2007) refer to the common elements shared by this type of population:

- Repetitive, monotonous playing in musical improvisations
- Difficulty in finishing a musical improvisation
- Repeating rhythmic and melodic sequences continuously
- Musical productions are fragmented, dispersed and incoherent
- They do not seem to experience music-making as a self-made activity
- They do not find inspiration in music
- Inability to structure a musical production (p.3)

This aspect is interesting since the responses of the musical experience can provide us with tools to, on the one hand, get to know the patient better and, on the other hand, so that they know themselves better.

A study carried out within the public health system in a mental health centre (Loroño, 1996) describes the importance of offering, through music therapy, contexts different from the usual one in order to favour expression, creativity, participation and other experiences that promote and improve individual and group communication channels.

Most of the therapeutic objectives proposed with this population have to do with skills and social relationships. In short, music therapy provides a sense of general well-being that improves interpersonal relationships and, consequently, social interaction. Along these lines, a subsequent publication (Salvador & Martinez, 2013) studies the intervention of music therapy with a group of people with

SMD (schizophrenia). Changes are observed in the social area, with an increase in group cohesion and the sense of belonging.

In order for changes to occur in the dynamics of relationships in the group in the social environment, it is important to work on the concept of identity, self-concept, and the ability to make decisions. In this sense, a study with hospitalized people who have schizophrenia (MacDonald, 2015) provides results where music therapy alleviates the negative identity and self-stigma that most people with SMD suffer to a large extent. Group work connects them with people who have lived similar experiences and improves their knowledge of themselves and interpersonal relationships.

Music Therapy Projects for People with Severe Mental Disorders

In a study dependent on the University of Valencia (Montánchez & Peirats, 2012), researchers collect the methodological practices of music therapy with people with SMD, in this case, with schizophrenia. They provide different practices, as well as aspects related to the organization of the sessions, the most appropriate materials and instruments, recommended techniques, evaluation procedures, and the most appropriate recording systems. They mention aspects to be taken into account, among others:

- a) Percussion instruments are recommended. Due to their ease of handling, they are most suitable for this population, taking into account their motor and coordination limitations.
- b) The therapeutic bond between the therapist and user and the user's active participation are the factors that most influence the achievement of favourable results.
- c) Adapt the reports to people beyond what is standardized by using their records.
- d) Conduct assessments at the beginning and end of each session.
- e) The most highly regarded nonverbal techniques are relaxation with music and dance therapy. Within these techniques, the recommended activities are body expression, interpretation and singing.

In this way, and with what is extracted from this didactic article, "The Music Therapist and Its Methodological Prac-

tices in the Re-education of Schizophrenia" (2012), we would have the basis to establish a session type.

Music therapists use many different techniques, personalizing each intervention to the user. These intervention techniques are used to achieve objectives such as self-expression, expression of emotions, body movement, participation, social interaction, communication, socialization, creativity, and the feeling of group identity (De Witte et al., 2020; Hegde, 2017; Van Assche, from Backer & Vermote, 2015; Carr, Odell-Miller & Priebe, 2013; Edwards, 2006).

INTERVENTION PROPOSAL

It is a proposal for a music therapy intervention aimed at users of the Argá Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre (CRPS Argá). The intervention aims to facilitate communication and social interaction and improve the neighbourhood's social integration.

To this end, on the one hand, a block of activities aimed at more personal work (promoting and improving intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships) between users within the centre itself is proposed, and on the other hand, other activities that would be aimed at participation in musical activities already existing in the community environment (Fanfanxar musical group). They follow a logical and chronological order; that is, the activities within the centre are the basis and preparation from which you will be able to work and participate in neighbourhood activities.

Objectives

The proposal for music therapy intervention that is presented has an impact, on the one hand, on internal work in order to promote interaction between participants, improve self-esteem or self-concept, verbal and non-verbal expression, etc., understanding these skills as something fundamental and will facilitate entry into the community. On the other hand, participation, together with the musical group Fanfanxar, both in rehearsals and in their subsequent participation in the festive musical events of the neighbourhood, will be the tool or the path for their social integration into the neighbourhood community.

Participants

The intervention approach is aimed at a group of 8 people between 30 and 60 years old who have difficulties in

relating to each other and integrating into the community life of the neighbourhood. The centre where it is to be carried out, CRPS Argá, is located in a central area of the San Juan neighbourhood (Pamplona, Navarra). It is necessary to contextualize where this music therapy proposal is framed, and it is necessary to refer to the community reactivation that has been developing in the neighbourhood for the last ten years.

This community reactivation arises from a need to create a neighbourhood identity, activate life in it, humanize the space and its inhabitants and, above all, seek social integration for all those who make it up. CRPS Argá, together with other groups and entities in the neighbourhood, works with this premise. This offers an optimal scenario for the realization of the proposal that is presented.

Resources

A multidisciplinary team is required to carry out the intervention. Therefore, a music therapist and other professionals from the centre—an occupational therapist, psychologist, social worker, job trainers and techniques in social integration—will be involved.

The material resources that will be required are extensive and varied, ensuring that all aspects of the intervention are thoroughly planned and catered for. These include percussion musical instruments, other instruments such as keyboard and guitar, furniture, writing and painting materials, songbooks, and CDs.

As for technical resources, a comprehensive set of tools is required to ensure the smooth running of the intervention. These include a computer with access to YouTube or Spotify, a projector and screen for visual aids, two speakers for audio, and a digital camera for documentation purposes, along with a CD player for music playback.

Procedure

The sessions

The total durability of the intervention is more than one school year, structured in two modalities of sessions, and all of them are in groups. The sessions that will be held within the centre itself will be 8, lasting 1 hour with a weekly frequency. In the community context, together with the musical group Fanfanxar, rehearsal sessions will be held, lasting 1 hour and a half per week. Finally, participation in the festive events of the neighbourhood, which are 4.

Each of the two blocks of sessions pursues different objectives. The activities carried out within the centre are intended to provide a safe space, encourage verbal and corporal expression, facilitate interaction and promote group cohesion and identity through musical activities and dynamics. The activities in the community context seek to encourage participation in the festive-musical events of the neighbourhood, as well as to facilitate a link not only with the members of the musical group Fanfanxar but also with the neighbours of the neighbourhood; in short, to generate or facilitate a playful, fun and enriching space in the neighbourhood itself.

Music therapy methodology

Following the model of Group Music Therapy proposed and described by Sabbatella (2007), the techniques that will be carried out in this proposal are focused on emotional activation and the promotion of the sense of identity, both individual and collective. In most of the activities proposed, the model of active music therapy (work with songs, musical improvisations, handling of instruments, dances and dynamic games, etc.) is proposed, with few so-called passive (listening to different songs).

These techniques provide an incentive for participants' responses and behaviours at the individual level, but they also promote changes in group dynamics. People see in others those things that we are not able to identify in ourselves. Our peers are the mirror in which we look at ourselves. The learning and modulation that the peer group allows is difficult to achieve in an individual relationship. The group brings structure, security and strength.

Table 1a

Summary of sessions and activities.

In the Neighborhood Community	
Previous session with users	Let's get out of the comfort zone
Previous session with musical group	Contact
Joint Session	Creating music together
Rehearsal sessions and participation in festive	Trials. Public holidays: Holidays, Neighborhood Day Orantzaro, Carnival

Source: own elaboration

Table 1b

Summary of sessions and activities.

At the CRPS Arga Center	
SESSIONS	ACTIVITIES
Session 1	Welcome. Welcome song: Who I am and how I feel
Session 2	Welcome song. How I Show Up and How Others See Me
Session 3	Welcome song. What does music convey to me?
Session 4	Welcome song. The conductor
Session 5	Welcome song. The Statue Game. Putting rhythm to music
Session 6	Welcome song. Let's sing and dance together
Session 7	Welcome song. Approaching the neighborhood...
Session 8	Welcome song. We say goodbye... Collective musical embrace

Source: own elaboration

Table 2a

Schedule.

ACCIONES	sep	oct	nov	dic	jan	feb	mar	apr	may
Previous tasks									
8 MT sessions at the center									
1st Session previous users									
1st Session of the Fanfanxar Musical Group									
Weekly group sessions									

Source: own elaboration

Table 2b

Schedule.

ACCTIONS	jun	sep	dic	feb
Special Events	Parties	Neighborhood Day	Orantzaro	Carnival

Source: own elaboration

Data collection and analysis

A processual evaluation is carried out on a temporary basis: at the beginning and the end of all the sessions and also after each of them. The most widely used data collection tool will be the observational record sheet (see Table 3). During the sessions, it is essential to record all the responses, gestures, participation, etc., of each user in order to collect the most significant events. Depending on the objectives of each session, the items and areas of observation may vary. Documentary support will be very useful during the sessions to ensure that no details are missed.

To collect the participants' subjective impressions, the Likert-type scale is proposed (see Table 4), evaluating from 1 to 5, with one not at all and 5 being a lot, with some items referring to how they have felt. Another type of scale has been designed to assess the degree of satisfaction of the musical group members.

All user participation will be collected following the premises of informed consent and appropriate confidentiality commitments. (Fattorini & Gamella, 2021).

Finally, a form has been designed in order to collect the musical tastes and preferences of each participant, in order to be able to use it in the different activities proposed (see table 6).

Although a bibliographic search of material, such as scales and registers, has been carried out, it has been decided to elaborate them as new material, so that they adapt to reality and are comfortable for the figure of music therapist in their work

RESULTS

This music therapy intervention aims to improve the process of social integration of the users of the CRPS Arga, making them participants in the community life of the neighbourhood. To this end, the proposed model propo

Table 3a*Observation form*

Mood at the beginning of the session (Welcome song)									
Person 1:									
Person 2:									
Person 3:									
Person 4:									
Person 5:									
Person 6:									
Person 7:									
Person 8:									
ÍTEMS (yes/no) INDIVIDUAL	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	s7	s8	
Displays an open and relaxed body attitude									
Shows self-confidence and self-assurance									
Maintains active listening, both in musical activities and in subsequent reflections and dialogues									
Actively participate by showing initiative and proposing new ideas									
Express emotions, concerns, or doubts without fear of judgment									
Follow the rhythms or tempos that are proposed									

Source: own elaboration

Table 3b*Observation form*

ITEMS (yes/no) WITH THEIR PEERS	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	s7	s8
Cooperate with the rest of the participants, listening to each other's ideas and respecting different opinions								
Assumes a leadership role with respect to others								
Show commitment to the group in the dynamics								
Shows empathetic listening and respect for other classmates								
Maintains eye contact with the rest of the group during musical activities and during conversations that take place								
Coordinates with the body movements of the rest of the group								
REMARKS								

Source: own elaboration

Table 4*Personal Perception Questionnaire*

Name and surname:	DATE				
How have I felt?	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt comfortable and relaxed					
I have felt happy					
I've been feeling energized					
I have been interested in the activity					
I have felt fulfilled or satisfied					
I felt included in the group					
I have felt motivated					
I have felt capable of carrying out the dynamics					

Source: own elaboration

Table 5a*Participation Registration*

PARTICIPATION IN TRIALS (YES/NO)						
	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
S.1						
S.2						
S.3						
S.4						
S.5						
S.6						
S.7						
S.8						

Source: own elaboration

Table 5b*Participation Registration*

PARTICIPATION IN TRIALS (YES/NO)				
	Neighbourhood festivals	Neighborhood Day	Orantzaroa	Carnivals
S.1				
S.2				
S.3				
S.4				
S.5				
S.6				
S.7				
S.8				

Source: own elaboration

Table 6*Quiz on musical preferences*

PERSONAL DATA	Name and surname:	Age:
What does music mean to you?		
What kind of music do you listen to? (mark with an X)		
Jazz/Blues <input type="checkbox"/>	Pop/música contemporánea para adultos <input type="checkbox"/>	
Electrónica <input type="checkbox"/>	Canciones tradicionales vascas <input type="checkbox"/>	
Músicas del mundo <input type="checkbox"/>	Rock/alternativa/indie <input type="checkbox"/>	
Música clásica <input type="checkbox"/>	Country <input type="checkbox"/>	Música urbana (hip hop..) <input type="checkbox"/>
	Jotas navarras <input type="checkbox"/>	Otros: <input type="checkbox"/>
When do you feel the need to listen to music? (mark with an X)		
When I need to relax <input type="checkbox"/>	When I need to wake up <input type="checkbox"/>	
When I'm sad <input type="checkbox"/>	When I'm happy <input type="checkbox"/>	
When I need think <input type="checkbox"/>	Anytime <input type="checkbox"/>	
Another situation:		
What is the song you like the most? Why?		
What music does it cause you rejection? Why?		
List your 3 favorite groups or singers		

Source: own elaboration

ses internal work with the group itself, understanding it as a basis and preparation to carry out external work in community life. With the musical activities and dynamics proposed in the first block, internally, users would develop a series of personal skills that would improve social relationships and interaction between people in the group, increase their ability to express themselves verbally and non-verbally, improve self-esteem and self-concept, empowerment, skills in conflict resolution and interaction with the group, among others.

The acquisition of these skills would improve or facilitate entry into the community. In addition, this entry into the community life of the neighbourhood would be carried out progressively, in two stages: first, through active participation together with the musical group Fanfanxar in weekly rehearsals, where they would begin to interact outside their nucleus and develop other types of skills, both personal (routine, commitment, communication...) and musical, and finally, in participation in festive-musical events in the neighbourhood.

The fact that they are participants in an action carried out by them would improve their self-concept and self-esteem, among others. They would interact with other neighbours in the neighbourhood, and their sense of belonging would increase, thus improving their general well-being and making their participation in the community life of the neighbourhood more attractive and natural.

Finally, these scales will be endorsed by a self-analysis by the music therapy professional (Fernández, Gamella, & García, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

The activity presented is a well-defined project with specific sessions and content, which allows flexibility in adapting it to each of the users. Although the bibliographic sources on this topic are not extensive, there is a well-founded theoretical basis that shows the benefits of music therapy in this population. In addition, the elaboration of a material of scales and registers of its own provides naturalness and adequacy.

The progressive intervention approach, from an initial level focused on the person and their peer group, allows laying the foundations to continue progressing in an alien and unknown group, also, as a previous step to being able to integrate into community activities with a feeling of belonging and participation.

Likewise, the effect that this type of experience can have on people's prejudice towards those who have a mental disorder, which is called social stigma, is very important.

The musical activities that are proposed are simple, enjoyable, and provide security and confidence. In addition, each musical activity is linked to at least one objective related to the achievement of personal skills (increasing self-esteem and self-realization, promoting creativity and spontaneity, improving body and emotional expression, working on attentive listening, etc.).

Moreover, as we approach working abroad with the musical group Fanfanxar, the activities and objectives vary and focus more on social skills (learning to work in a group, increasing active participation, creating or fostering an emotional bond, etc.). In short, the musical activities that are proposed serve as a roadmap for the integration of these people into the community life of the neighbourhood in a progressive, playful, and fun way. This model is necessary to achieve the final objective, which is to participate in street performances surrounded by people who enjoy the activity. There is no doubt that carrying out an intervention in the leisure environment is already rewarding in itself and reverts to feelings of well-being.

This is a proposal, so it has not been carried out, and therefore, the details and difficulties that may arise are hypothetical. In addition, the work poses some limitations. The sample chosen is very small, and it would be interesting to be able to expand it and carry out comparable groups in order to conclude what level of impact the intervention has on the real improvement of integration and interpersonal relationships. Another limitation is that today, CRPS Arga does not meet all the necessary conditions to be able to carry out the intervention since it does not have enough material and space for it.

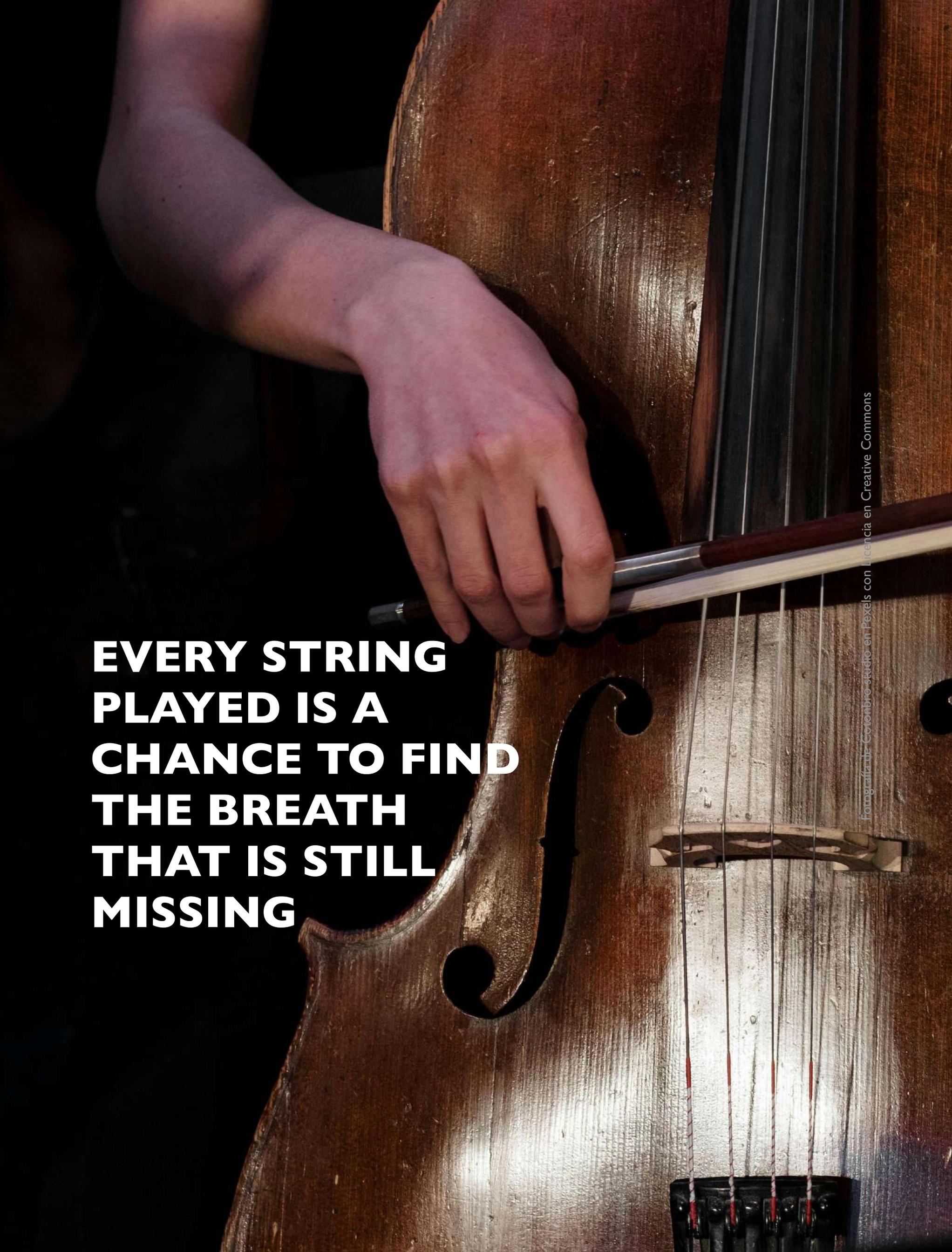
It is considered that it can be a starting point for this type of music therapy intervention, which not only works with users but also proposes other types of actions together with other people, entities, and groups in the neighbourhood to be implemented in other community environments.

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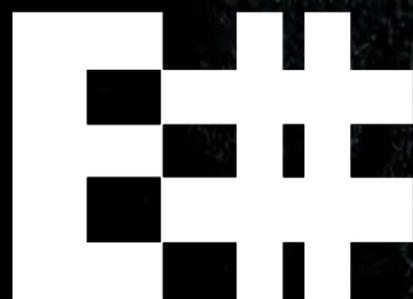
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