



Book Review:

Music Therapy and Music and Health

review

Title of the Book Reviewed:
Music Therapy and Music and Health.

Author: **Even Ruud.**

Publisher: **iDETEC.**

Year of publication: **2026.**

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20854708>

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In *Music Therapy and Music and Health*, Even Ruud offers a wide, profound, and humanistic perspective on contemporary music therapy. This book is more than a technical manual and it invites us to rethink our practice from the encounter, relationship, and meaning by integrating theory, clinical practice, and social commitment. This review seeks to examine some of its main contributions and reflect on the current significance of accompanying health processes by means of music. Reading this work involves much more than dealing with an academic handbook; in my view, it involves engaging in a profound conversation about our professional identity. Consequently, this text is not a quick read. Instead it requires time and reflection, with each chapter inviting readers to pause and review their own practice, and to question honestly the reasons and purposes of our work as music therapists.

In particular, I believe that Ruud is able to combine theoretical rigour with a deeply human sensitivity. Throughout the work, music therapy is presented not only as a clinical discipline, but also as a way of being with others through sound, the body, and the relationship. For those of us who work in settings connected to health, education, or the community, the way the author shifts the focus from technique to the encounter and from the intervention to resonance is especially relevant. Specifically, practice ceases to be understood as merely the strategic application of intervention methods and techniques, and it comes to be seen as a space for shared experience.

The book is organised in nine large interrelated thematic sections. It starts with an introduction to the essentials of this therapeutic speciality, describing music therapy's goals, professional roles, and areas of practice, and providing a historical overview of ideas about music and health in Western culture. This initial framework positions contemporary music therapy as a scientific and professional discipline, rooted in a long tradition of reflection on the transformational power of music.

From this point, Ruud develops his central proposal: music as a promoter of health. This section introduces key concepts such as well-being, resonance, and music as cultural protection, integrating biological, psychological, and existential dimensions. Similarly,

the clinical perspective is expanded towards a focus on public health and prevention that sees music as a vital resource that can strengthen agency, belonging, meaning, and vital energy.

Next, one of the book's longest sections considers music therapy in clinical and educational practice. In this section, experiences with different populations and contexts are described, including childhood, school, mental health, somatic medicine, neurology, old age, dementia, addictions, migration, and the prison system, ranging from specific needs and therapeutic goals to particular forms of intervention. This, however, is not a simple technical enumeration. Instead, it is a sensitive presentation of each scenario as a complex human framework in which music can open up spaces for encounter, memory, expression, and participation.

This analysis continues with a review of the principal theoretical models and therapeutic focuses. Humanistic, psychodynamic, neurological, community, and trauma-informed perspectives, among others, dialogue with contributions from developmental psychology, neuroscience, and critical theories. From this position, Ruud proposes a comprehensive vision that avoids closed models and promotes clinical flexibility, reminding us that music-therapy practice demands a constant capacity for adaptation and reflection.

The author then explores specific ways of working with music: improvisation, listening, composition, singing, bodywork, digital technologies, and receptive music. This group of resources is not presented as a list of isolated techniques, but rather as relational practices that acquire meaning through the therapeutic link and the cultural context.

Similarly, an especially important section centres on music therapy as a profession in itself, namely, the music therapist's identity, multiple roles, limits of the exercise, ethics, and interdisciplinary cooperation. It specifically emphasises the importance of continuous training, supervision, and professional development as cornerstones of music-therapy practice, while at the same time inviting us to keep a critical attitude towards institutional structures and power dynamics.

The book concludes with a philosophical and sociological reflection, directed towards an understanding of a critical and socially well-positioned model of music therapy. This conclusion reinforces the idea of music as a relational force and an agent of social transformation that is sensitive to context, diversity, and communal processes.

In my opinion, as music therapists, it is difficult not to identify with some of the passages in the text: doubts about the limits of roles, the tension between evidence and experience, or the constant need to reflect on power, context, and responsibility. Notably, Ruud does not offer closed solutions, but instead poses questions. This deeply pedagogical gesture returns to the discipline its complexity and its reflexive character. Many of

these questions can help us reflect on how professionalism involves much more than mere technical command, and how we must maintain an ethical presence in every one of our therapeutic encounters.

Ultimately, *Music Therapy and Music and Health* is a beguiling work. It can help students who are looking for solid foundations, professionals who wish to refresh their outlook, and established therapists who, in the midst of their day-to-day work, need to recall that music also sustains us. In short, this is a book that invites us to see the profession not only as an intervention, but also as presence, a connection, and a commitment to life.