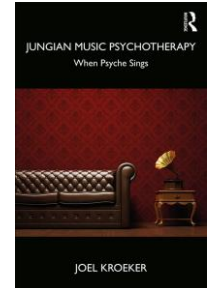


BOOK REVIEW

Jungian music psychotherapy: When psyche sings (Kroeker)

Reviewed by Catherine O'Leary

Independent scholar, UK



Title: Jungian music psychotherapy. When psyche sings. **Author:** Joel Kroeker **Publication year:** 2019 **Publisher:** Routledge
Pages: 187 **ISBN:** 978-1-138-62566-2

REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Catherin O'Leary BA, BMus, MA, is a registered music therapist and an EAMI registered GIM therapist. She has worked in the US, the UK and Ireland with a variety of populations. She has an MA in Jungian and Post- Jungian Psychology from Essex University. Her dissertation was on Jung and Music. [c-oleary@hotmail.co.uk]

Publication history:

Submitted 7 Jan 2021
Accepted 12 Jan 2021
First published 17 Feb 2021

Joel Kroeker's book *Jungian Music Psychotherapy: When Psyche Sings* is a wonderful addition to the growing body of literature on Jungian psychology and music. The book explores the musical environment or eco-system, which includes every kind of interaction we have with music, whether it be listening, playing, composing, imagining, our conscious awareness of the music in and of our lives and what may lie beyond our conscious awareness. One of Kroeker's aims with this book is to address the gap in the Jungian literature where music is the most unexplored of all the arts.

Kroeker makes a connection between music and dreaming. Music brings you into the imaginal realm very quickly. This allows it to be full of potential for further amplification but also poses some risks. In order to fully explore what happens when we "are inside the musical ecosystem" (p.34), the author feels a new form of depth psychology is needed. The approach he has developed, and which is described in detail in the book, is what he calls *Archetypal Music Psychotherapy* (AMP).

The book is laid out in 14 chapters, many of them quite short, with a foreword by Jungian analytical psychologist, Mark Winborn, and an additional introduction by Kroeker. Each chapter is referenced separately and there is an excellent index at the back. The book is a treasure trove for anyone working with music who is interested in a Jungian approach but it is also aimed specifically at analysts themselves. Some of the chapter titles will draw a smile of recognition such as *The Red Album*.

From the early years of the twentieth century, analysts and analytical psychologists have been suggesting that music itself has much to offer in analysis. Hildemarie Streich, an early protégée of Jung's, recommended paying attention to "the least occurrence of a musical motif. While it may appear entirely insignificant, its analysis yields much more than it was first assumed" (Streich, 2009, p. 65). The psychoanalyst Theodore Reik also believed that the incidental music accompanying our conscious thinking was never accidental and that we would benefit psychologically from paying

attention to it. "We all put much of our hidden thoughts and preconscious emotions into the melodies we hear, and we all would be surprised if we paid more attention to them when they echo in us" (Reik 1953, p.102). Jung himself suggested that music should be part of every session (Tilly, 1977). As a music therapist I was trained to listen to every aspect of the session, to hear how the patient or client 'sounds', whether that is what they are playing or the rhythm and tempo of their movement, of how they are feeling and relating. Kroeker is also encouraging analysts to pay attention not only to every musical meme, but to bring a musical ear to the session and to listen to the dialogue as if it were a piece of music.

There are two questions he returns to over and over in the book: what is music and what is perception? Music is multi layered and perception is creative. Music is like a waking dream, carrying a tremendous amount of content, both conscious and unconscious. Jungian analysis is all about extending our awareness beyond our everyday ego consciousness. Both music and dreaming open us beyond our conscious ego stance. Properly facilitated expressive musical processes offer an outlet for untapped inner resources and can reveal significant aspects that may not arise through verbal work alone. To assume that music "is loaded with meaning" and "to experience music like this is to begin a dialogue with deep psyche" (p. 43).

Regarding perception, Kroeker discusses the difference between hearing and listening. He speaks of our auditory digestive system which metabolises the sounds we hear into meaning, similar to our self-regulating psyche. We hear but there is a lot more going on and we can open ourselves up to it. While the ear hears, something much deeper within us listens and creates meaning. Listening is a creative experience. We create music out of sound. This latter point is like a leitmotif in the book. Music as such does not exist. Kroeker's formula is that "music = sound + time and any further interpretation is related to cultural or personal associations" (p. 137). The transformation of turning perceived sound into music remains an inexplicable enigma (p. 38). Our music ego hears more than our everyday ego. By tuning in we can hear more of our music, learn to listen through the surface layers and become aware of our 'deaf spots' (p. 44). "The psychic reality is that music, like a dream, is often merely a trigger for our own experience of our inner world" (p. 42).

After more than 20 years working creatively with patients, Kroeker has observed certain patterns with enough consistency to form AMP. He states that "AMP is not a formulaic method" (p. 71) nor is this a workbook, but that it is "more like a view, which this book exposes the reader to by circumambulating various ways of relating to musical symbols" (p. 71). Chapter 8 describes the six principles that he feels are core to this view: 1) Perception is a creative act; 2) Loosening attachment to mastery can liberate expression; 3) Improvisation is the inner state manifested in outer form; 4) Sound is an image, which can be a glimpse of wholeness; 5) Active imagination can be done through musical means; 6) Holding irrelevant aspects in a constellation can lead to consilience. Each principle is discussed separately. A number of these principles are very familiar territory for music therapists but Kroeker works consistently from a Jungian perspective and maintains a symbolic attitude.

If some of the ideas are familiar, what is different in this book is the language Kroeker has developed to talk about music in analysis. As music therapy developed as a profession in the second half of the twentieth century a recurring debate concerned the verbal content of music therapy sessions. How much, if any, verbal content should there be and what psychological model should inform that content? The challenge is always how to find a vocabulary that can translate musical

experience into words. Music therapist and Jungian analyst, Diane Austin, described how as she became more skilled in making verbal interventions in her sessions, she found that she was losing the music (Austin, 1999). She had to work at integrating music once again with the words in her analytically oriented music therapy. Kroeker has succeeded in devising a vocabulary combining musical and psychological terms and has introduced a number of very useful concepts in this book, certainly some that I will continue to use. The following are but a few examples that I particularly enjoyed: diatonic fantasy refers to “the pre-initiatory childhood notion that the whole world will be harmonious for us” (p. 109); musical foreclosure refers to the danger of shutting down a musical dialogue prematurely and includes “offering too many musical ideas too soon in an analytical improvisation session, being overly musically supportive when confrontation or silence is more appropriate, playing to the genre rather than responding in a more nuanced way” (p. 117). Personally, I am always aware of the attraction of a final cadence in improvisation! He talks of splitting sound into good and bad, exploring pain through the dissonance-consonance threshold and musical tide-pooling. These are new terms to describe well recognised experiences and a wonderful addition to the literature.

While it has been difficult for music therapists to integrate the verbal side, Kroeker recognises that bringing the music in is not easy for many analysts. He wonders why analysts assume authority with verbal communication but presume that musical interaction is only for musical experts. He echoes Small's idea that we must reclaim music and 'musicking' as an expression of our humanness (Small, 1998). Too often we hand music over to experts, composers, performers, academicians, those who we think know about music. 'To music' includes every kind of interaction we have with music, whether it be listening, playing, composing, imagining, our conscious awareness of the music in and of our lives and what may lie beyond our conscious awareness. However, he also warns a number of times that music brings you into the imaginal realm very quickly and there is a danger of going too deep too fast. As a music therapist I have spent many hours improvising and developing my inner ear. Analysts also need to practice “reflective improvisation, depth-oriented composition and contemplative listening” (p. 146). Music mastery as such is not required.

Musical Approaches to Analytic Technique, Chapter 12, is the longest chapter in the book. In this chapter Kroeker's discussions include the similarity between musical and analytic structure, musical transference, musical acting out and the many defences that can be just as easily expressed musically. No one has given such a deep and thorough exploration of what music has to offer analysis.

Kroeker is hoping that this book will spark music-oriented applications for analysts and analysts. I hope so too. He has shown what a fruitful collaboration it is, and I look forward to further developments.

REFERENCES

- Austin, D. (1999). Vocal improvisation in analytically oriented therapy with adults. In T. Wigram & J. de Backer (Eds.), *Clinical adaptations of music therapy in psychiatry* (pp.141-157). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Reik, T. (1953). *The haunting melody: Psychoanalytic experiences in life and music*. Farrar, Straus and Young.
- Small, C. (1998) *Musicking*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Streich, H. (2009). Music in dreams. *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche*, 3(2), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jung.2009.3.2.63>
- Tilly, M. (1977). The therapy of music. In W. McGuire & R.F.C. Hull (Eds.), *C.G. Jung speaking: Interviews and encounters* (pp. 261-263). Picador Publishers.