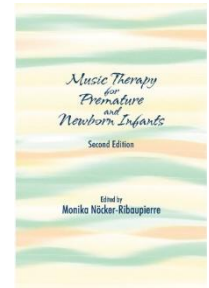


## BOOK REVIEW

# Music therapy for premature and newborn infants (2nd ed., Nöker-Ribaupierre, Ed.)

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**Title:** Music therapy for premature and newborn infants (2nd Edition) **Editor:** Monika Nöker-Ribaupierre **Publication year:** 2019 **Publisher:** Barcelona Publishers **Pages:** 310 **ISBN:** 9781945411458

### REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

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### Publication history:

Submitted 31 Jan 2019  
Accepted 7 Aug 2019  
First published 19 Oct 2019

As the editor quotes in her preface to the second edition, “the course of human development is shaped by the exchange between psychosocial and neurophysiological process” (p. xviii). Increasingly neuroscience provides evidence of the important role of reflective and sympathetic parenting in normal brain development and successful attachment. Emotional development in infants is contingent upon the latter, and the attention now paid to perinatal mental health and the early experiences of infants bears testament to this.

Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU), Neonatal Unit (NNU) and Special Care babies are disadvantaged from the start because the normal path of early infant development is interrupted at an early stage and it is recognised that the sequelae of premature birth can impact attachment adversely. As both a practising midwife in the UK and practising NNU music therapist, I witness this disruption frequently, affecting both parents and babies. Reviewing this book has been a joy: the contributors represent a pool of experienced music therapists from The Americas, Europe and Australia who feel an imperative, with different lenses, to support, contain, repair, encourage and preserve the precious link between parent and infant through the medium of music and voice.

The book is divided into two parts: Part One: The Basics (probably more appropriately ‘the essentials’), and Part Two, focussing on research and clinical practice.

A comprehensive description of the neurodevelopment of the infant written by Heidelies Als, Harvard professor and founder of NIDCAP (Newborn Individualised Developmental Care and Assessment Programme), is well placed at the beginning of the book. Her work has informed neonatal care models in NICUs/NNUs the world over, such as the FINE (Family and Infant Neurodevelopmental Education) programme in the UK. An understanding of neurodevelopmental support of premature infants is essential for music therapists to both develop a programme in NNU/NICU and also to engage with the discourse and ethos of the unit in which they work.

Chapter Two provides thought-provoking, quantified detail about the auditory processes of infants both in and ex utero, highlighting the potentially damaging effects of noise on the preterm infant's development.

Chapters Three and Four address music and the emotional experience and development of infants from both a psychoanalytic and developmental theory perspective. Maiello hypothesises that the maternal voice or '*sound-object*' (p. 68) represents a separate experience for the infant pre-birth, and that the infant has a sense of me/not me before birth. The infant learns trust with the regular, rhythmic coming and going of maternal voice; this trust extending and developing beyond birth as the newborn continues to hear maternal singing and talking. This resonates with neuroscientific enquiry that suggests the unborn infant begins to develop a sense of its own body (UCL 2018), potentially experiencing a degree of physical separateness before it is born.

Even premature babies are born with many possible, independent ways of communicating (seeking eye contact, turning away, grimacing, splaying fingers, sucking), but it is only through consistent, repetitive, attuned interaction with a parent/carer that the infant begins to self-regulate emotionally, and Daniel Stern's theories are widely drawn upon in Chapter Four to effectively illustrate this.

Part Two begins with a chapter by Menke, Keith and Schwartz describing the impact of stress (both physiological and psychosocial) on pregnancies, families and babies, using a broad evidence base. The authors include a concise research review of music therapy interventions addressing the stressors for this demographic.

Editor Monika Nöcker-Ribaupierre's own chapter describes the maternal voice as a bridge for the infant between worlds; from intra- to extrauterine life, then from NICU to home. In her chapter she extends the metaphor to suggest the voice is also a bridge for the mother between pregnancy and sudden motherhood, and also as an emotional element of connection. Nöcker-Ribaupierre sensitively highlights the mother's emotional plight in NICU, describing what many of us may discover in neonatal work; that in reality many mothers find it emotionally impossible to sing at all. She describes her use of recorded maternal voice as providing yet another bridge where mothers cannot use their own voices, for whatever reason (the inference being that babies might be in different hospitals in some cases), while acknowledging that live interaction is preferable if possible. ASM (Auditory Stimulation with the Mother's Voice) enables a continuing relationship between mother and baby – it addresses bonding, interaction and infant development.

In the following chapter, an example of the practical application of Nöcker-Ribaupierre's ASM technique is documented by Zimmer, and for the first time in the book socioeconomic/political factors influencing families are specifically considered. The term 'Mentally Retarded Mothers' (p. 173) was unexpected; many readers would be more comfortable with the terms *learning disability* or *additional needs*.

Mark Ettenberger's excellent chapter focuses on Family Centred Music Therapy in Colombia. He includes a useful and comprehensive table of studies conducted on the subject.

The theme of viewing the infant in the context of the family is extended in the following chapter to older babies with severe and complex medical and surgical needs. Here Shoemark and Tucquet describe an admirable model of care in The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia, where

music therapy (as described in this chapter) is frequently the first intervention offered to families. A shared discourse and vision of care by all staff is the take-home message for success.

American researcher and music therapist Joanna Loewy has developed an evidence-based, standardised approach to providing a NICU music therapy programme: *First Sounds: Rhythm, Breathe and Lullaby*. In Chapter Eleven she highlights contemporary ideas and themes inspirationally and eloquently, as well as describing the programme and providing an example of a programme proposal complete with referral criteria.

The concluding chapter is written by Deanna Hanson-Abromeit, who has over twenty years' experience in the field. Here she aims to guide music therapists setting up a NICU programme and comprehensively provides expert and detailed information and suggestions, including an example of a proposal outline. Her chapter reads as a manual.

In my experience, knowledge of care models and the culture of NICU/NNU/special care is essential for music therapy work in this field. Specialist NICU music therapy training, although established in America, is less established elsewhere. This book broadly covers the theory and evidence a music therapist needs, and would supplement a period of clinical orientation for those considering music therapy in this field.

## REFERENCES

University College London (2018). Babies kicking in the womb are creating a map of their bodies. *NeuroscienceNews*. Retrieved from <https://neurosciencenews.com/baby-kicking-body-map-10278/>