BRIEF REPORT

The Magical Music Shop

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Within the broad spectrum of the creative arts therapies, which include music, art, dance, and drama, there are many possibilities for therapeutic applications. All clients who seek therapy have different needs and backgrounds and different propensities for self-expression. Although many people derive benefits from the more traditional verbally based insight therapies, others find the strictures of verbal-only methods limiting. The arts therapies, particularly music, dance, and psychodrama, are action-based methods that may be liberating and provide an openness of expression not readily available in the primarily verbal, one-to-one, therapist and client methods.

All arts therapies are potentially complementary and can provide many interesting possibilities for their integration. I have documented the integration of music and psychodrama in the book *Acting Your Inner Music: Music Therapy and Psychodrama* (Moreno, J. J., 1999a) and in related publications (1985, 1991, 1999b).

The warm-up is a significant and critical part of every psychodramatic process. For any group of participants in a psychodrama, the director has the responsibility and challenge to initiate a process that will help to establish connections among group members and between the group and the director. An effective warm-up is one that energizes the group dynamics and leads to a growing atmosphere of spontaneity.

The Magic Shop psychodrama warm-up, created by J. L. Moreno (Z.T. Moreno, personal communication, 2004), is a deservedly popular and effective technique. The director plays the role of a symbolic shopkeeper and offers the group an opportunity to acquire the special personal qualities that are available through bartering. The qualities are generally desirable personal attributes or such conditions as self-confidence, courage, peace, happiness,

being loved, success, and so on. In other words, the qualities are whatever a person may be seeking in his or her life. Typically, those are qualities that are either missing or, at the least, inadequately developed in the potential customer's life.

If group members want to obtain any of those desired states, they do not purchase them with money. Rather, the acquisition is a process of negotiation and exchange. In return for the desired "merchandise," a person must give up something of himself or herself, often the very self-limiting traits that may have prevented personal growth and led to the present deficiencies.

Following the bartering process, a person may attempt to exchange shyness for needed self-confidence, feelings of anxiety for peace, fear for courage, anger for love, depression for happiness, and so on. One effect of the warm-up is to open up the central issues in a person's life situation, both the problems and aspirations. After the person bargains successfully, the director may ease the person into a protagonist role and further work on those issues in a psychodramatic exploration.

However useful the Magic Shop may be, it still shares certain limitations that are inherent in warm-up techniques that are largely verbal in nature. For example, in the Magic Shop, the protagonist must be comfortable enough to verbalize his or her needs directly, or at least be able to express them overtly in some form of action and to identify those problems that are holding him or her back. A person who is able to do that must, in a sense, be internally warmed up before the formal directed warm-up begins so that he or she can engage in a process that requires a certain level of spontaneity and playfulness. As a result, the most troubled and least spontaneous group members, perhaps those who most need to work, may not feel sufficiently comfortable to participate in that kind of warm-up and therefore miss the possibility of taking on the protagonist role. In effect, the director may often be projecting an unintended bias in favor of selecting the more spontaneous members, with the other troubled group members feeling excluded.

The Magic Shop and Music

One way to overcome whatever limitations may be inherent in predominantly verbal warm-ups, such as the Magic Shop, is to make nonverbal expressive elements, such as music, an intrinsic part of the process. One example of that is the use of music and imagery techniques. The individual then travels inwardly in response to recorded sedative background music. Without requiring any initial verbal expression, the therapist uses music to help the participants bypass cognitive defenses and other blocks and facilitate their inner contact and confrontation with significant personal issues. What is really happening is that the group members are gradually warming up themselves.

The therapist subsequently processes those experiences and asks the individual group members to share their imagery verbally.

Music and imagery is a now well-established music therapy technique, which was first introduced by Bonny (1973). According to that process, the therapist typically first involves the group in a period of progressive relaxation and explains to the group members that they will soon be hearing some recorded background music. The therapist further explains that during the music, as the group members sit with eyes closed, he or she will provide some verbal suggestions during the music. The therapist asks the group members to try to travel inwardly in response to the guidance and tells them that after the music, they are to share their imagery experiences with the therapist and group. The therapist designs the verbal guidance to be as nondirective and open-ended as possible, giving the participants the maximum freedom to explore their own issues fully through that projective technique. Supported by the music of "The Enchanted Lake," by Liadov, the therapist voices a typical verbal scenario: "Imagine yourself on a magic boat on a magic lake. You don't know where the boat will take you—perhaps to your past, to your future, or somewhere in the present. Try to trust the boat, and let it take you where it wants to go." The therapist assures the participants beforehand that if for any reason they find themselves too uncomfortable, they can open their eyes and stop the process at any time. My experience, however, has been that most group members complete the experience and subsequently share their imagery with the group.

At the end of the music, the therapist directs the participants to open their eyes and begin sharing. The therapist helps each person to process his or her imagery and begin to clarify the significance of the issues presented. Although for many, the imagery experiences may be positive, reflecting good things in their lives, for others, the experience may bring up conflicts and personal difficulties. However uncomfortable the initial confrontation with problematic issues might be, the process opens the door to the possibility of moving beyond the verbal processing and to using those same issues as a basis for psychodramatic exploration. In that way, even the most introverted group members have already internally warmed themselves up to the verbal aspect of sharing, which is the second stage in this process. In effect, this segment is a "warm-up to the warm-up," which may be a crucial step for some people and may strongly enhance the chance of moving even the least spontaneous individuals into the protagonist role. My purpose in this article is to explore more specifically an expansion of the Magic Shop warm-up, which I call the Magical Music Shop.

The Magical Music Shop begins in a way similar to the traditional Magic Shop, with the director announcing the various wonderful things that can be obtained in this special place, a magical music shop. The shopkeeper lets the group know that the place is first of all a music shop, a place where words are not important and where the shopkeeper deals primarily with music. To facili-

tate the participant's musical expression, the shop contains a variety of musical instruments that are in full view of the group. I suggest that the musical display be primarily percussion instruments, about four to eight of them, typically a variety of drums, bells, gongs, rattles, rain sticks, and xylophones. The significance of using percussion instruments is that they so easily lend themselves to immediate and personalized musical expression that is not dependent on any previous musical experience. The therapist as shopkeeper also briefly demonstrates some of the instruments' sound possibilities. The demonstration serves to engage the interest of the participants, to show the simplicity of execution and expression on the instruments, and to convey a sense of the instruments' dynamic and emotional range. As potential customers volunteer to negotiate for some personal desires, the therapist asks them to move beyond any initial verbal identification of their feelings. The therapist directs the clients to come up, seat themselves next to the instrument of their choice, and then to try to play the feeling or personal state that they desire. Even if a person is verbally clear from the start, saying, "I know I just want to be happy," the shopkeeper says something like, "Well, I need to hear it to see if I can use it. Remember, this is a music shop, and I can't sell words—we don't have much demand for them here." The shopkeeper also informs the customers that their music will be taped and preserved in a form that can be saved for future use.

After the performance, which can be as short or long as the individual desires, the therapist and group members listen to the playback. The group members are not to judge the music of the improvisations but rather to use their intuition to determine what the person is expressing through music. Their comments may include, "He sounds depressed" or "She sounds very happy." In each case, however, the therapist asks the individual music maker to clarify his or her intended feelings verbally. Whether the group's perception of the musical expression is correct or incorrect is a secondary point because the verbal clarification motivates the individual to assert more strongly the true nature of whatever he or she was trying to express.

As with the earlier music and imagery processes, the participants began their internal warm-up process well before they played their instruments. They had listened to the shopkeeper's musical demonstration in a way similar to the music and imagery strategy in which the internal imagery precedes the verbal sharing. In both contexts, there is an internal process that subsequently leads to overt expression. The internal exploration takes place as the participants begin to identify their feelings and desires and the way that they might express them through the musical sound possibilities now available to them. For example, the shopkeeper might say, "Well, this music has a really playful and free feeling to me. Is that what you're looking for—to be more playful and free?" or "This music has a very clear and organized feeling to it. Are you trying to find more clarity and purpose in your life?" At that stage, as

in the traditional Magic Shop, the shopkeeper can ask the person to elaborate verbally on the nature of his or her desires. That verbal expression has been gradually developed, first through the two stages of the imagined and then the actual musical expression, and then by their having had a second chance to reflect on their own music while listening to the playback on the recording. After the first playback, even before any questions of interpretation, the therapist can ask if the individual is satisfied with the music, if it really sounds like what he or she wants, or if the person might like to record it again. That step provides yet another opportunity for internal warm-up and clarification. Once a definitive musical expression has been recorded and verbally processed, the process of negotiation with the shopkeeper can begin.

The shopkeeper needs to support the participant and say that, for example, the music does sound very happy, playful, organized, peaceful, or whatever it is the individual is trying to express. The shopkeeper may also make it clear that many people are looking for similar things, and that those kinds of musical feelings are quite costly. Therefore, if the person really wants to acquire the positive feelings expressed in his or her projected music, he or she needs to give up something in return.

Once more, without the need for verbalization, the shopkeeper asks the person to consider the instruments again and this time express musically the negative feelings that he or she hopes to offer in exchange for the sought-after good feelings. The negative music is also recorded and discussed, with the option to re-record. If the director senses that the negative feelings are not being fully expressed, he or she might say something like, "I hear your pain. If you want to exchange that for happiness, you've got to give me a lot more of it. I do have a customer who is denying pain, and listening to some of your music could help that person face reality. But I really need much more of the music, and probably you'll feel better getting rid of it. Please give me all you've got!" In that way, the therapist encourages the individual toward a most complete catharsis of negative feelings.

By performing the personalized music and having it recorded, the individual focuses his or her feelings on an externalized, tangible, and permanent form. The therapist clarifies that the musical recordings subsequently become the property of the client, who may choose to use or discard them.

It should be stressed that this kind of musical improvisation does not result in music in the usual sense but is a very personalized kind of sound expression in which even the most subtle nuances can symbolically express a world of feelings. Those musical statements must be interpreted from an affective perspective, rather than from a more traditional musical one. The group's participants gradually become more sensitized to elements of musical dynamics that may be reflective of introverted or extroverted kinds of feelings. They sense whether the music has a single predominant character or a divided

expression, reflecting divisions in the person's life. They come to recognize the music sounds as organized or chaotic and understand the significance of the choice of instruments in a free-responding situation. I have observed that often a participant's few sounds made on these simple instruments can express, in the most concise way, some of the deepest issues the person is feeling in a life situation.

At this point in the session, the shopkeeper strikes a bargain with the person and agrees to accept the negative music in exchange for the positive feelings crystallized in the music of the person's desires. To close the deal, the shopkeeper reminds the person that he or she owns the created positive music and that nobody can take it away. The shopkeeper explains further that this is not an ordinary music shop, but rather a magical one. A ritual of magical musical transformation now takes place. The therapist asks the individual to sit facing the group, to close his or her eyes, and to listen to a replay of the positive music. The director tells the members that, while listening, the feelings of their own self-created music are magically entering their spirit and will begin to change them in their real lives in a permanent way. The therapist reminds the participants that they created the music in the first place, that it came from within, and that they can now give it the internal power that it deserves. The director gives the participants copies of the taped positive music with a reminder that they can play the magical music anytime they wish to hear it. It is their self-created magical musical medicine to be used as often as needed, with no need to worry about an overdose of good feelings.

The shopkeeper may also remind them that because they have now sold off most of their negative music in exchange for the good, there is little sense in trying to go back to it in the future. The shopkeeper might say, "I suppose you could re-create some more of that old negative music, but why would you want to do that?" The tape of the negative recorded music can also be given to the participants as a reminder of a place to which the therapist hopes they have no wish to return.

By this time in a session, the inner polarities of the person have been identified and expressed, and the individual is now fully warmed up and ready to enter into the role of protagonist in a psychodramatic enactment, as needed. Every participant in the exercise may not necessarily move into the protagonist role, but the experience can be cathartic and therapeutic in itself. This warm-up will take more time than the traditional Magic Shop, perhaps about 30 min for each person, but the results are well worth it. No single warm-up exercise can be appropriate for all participants because some people readily jump into the traditional Magic Shop warm-up with complete freedom, whereas others feel inhibited by it. That is precisely why it is important to have alternative types of warm-ups available. Projective music improvisation provides yet another kind of expressive outlet that is attractive to many peo-

ple (Moreno, 1999b). I have observed participants finding the use of the preverbal music improvisation process attractive. Many people have a strong attraction to playing the simple instruments, even if it is a first-time experience for them. This kind of music-making is often perceived as a kind of childlike play and can be seen as play therapy for adults.

Case Example

In the group, the protagonist-to-be was a woman who demonstrated a lack of overt expression and who seemed somehow isolated from the group. When I asked for volunteers for the music shop, she looked up, appeared interested, and shyly offered to try. From a choice of musical instruments that ranged from a snare drum, which was the most dynamic instrument, to a small plastic rattle, which was the softest instrument available, she selected the rattle. Then, when asked to create music that expressed the feelings that she wanted to obtain in the music shop, she proceeded to play in a manner that was lethargic and barely audible. Her blank facial expression and flaccid body language further contributed to the impression of a very depressed person. When the group members volunteered their perception of the music, they all offered that same idea.

I was a bit surprised and asked her about the feelings behind that music, because the music did not portray the kind of feelings that someone would want to have. She said that she was extremely lonely, had difficulty in sustaining meaningful personal relationships, and so on. I expressed my sympathy but also reminded her that she had been asked to express the music reflective of the things she wanted in life and that I wondered if this was what she was really seeking.

She quickly responded that those were the last things she wanted in life and that she hoped to escape loneliness and find a way to realize her dreams of intimacy and connection. I then told her that I understood that she wanted to get rid of her old music of pain and loneliness and that perhaps I could use it. First, however, I needed to hear the kind of music she wanted to acquire.

For her next improvisation, she chose a metal xylophone and a small bell, and she played those simultaneously. This time, her music was completely different, full of energy and movement. She played a rhythmic ostinato on the xylophone that was synchronized with the ringing of a bell, and the group and I concurred that this joyful sounding music was expressive of a very different emotional world.

She agreed that this was, indeed, the music of her dreams and expressive of the kind of loving relationship for which she longed. As the salesperson of the music shop, I offered her a deal. I told her that I happened to have a good supply of loving music in stock and would be glad to share some with her and that my sad music supply was very low. I told her that I would be pleased to

give her all the happiness music that she needed in exchange for all the sad music she had available. She eagerly agreed to the arrangement, and we shook hands to seal the bargain.

She then sat in front of the group, and I asked her to close her eyes, and we played the tape of her own happiness music improvisation. I assured her, as the music was playing, that the music was magically transforming, that it was permeating her being, and that it would have a long-lasting and positive effect. When she opened her eyes, she pronounced herself to be far more relaxed and hopeful for the future.

This warm-up process had taken place in the morning of a full-day workshop program. In the afternoon, when I asked the woman if she would be interested in further exploring her relationship issues as a protagonist in a psychodrama, she readily agreed. The results of the subsequent session, although helpful to her, are not relevant here. What is significant is the gradual process that brought her from being an initially hesitant group member to participating in the music shop, where she seemed at ease with musical expression and was without pressures to verbalize immediately what was troubling her. Through the magic-shop process, she gradually grew in confidence and spontaneity. Her own improvised music, as well as the director's and group members' intuitive responses to it, warmed her up to verbal sharing and finally to being a fully involved psychodramatic protagonist.

I hope that psychodrama directors will consider exploring this variation on the Magic Shop, because it may open up new possibilities in their work.

Key words: music therapy, psychodrama improvisation, psychodrama magic shop.

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