

COMMUNITY MUSIC THERAPY, IN CONCERT WITH YOU: PARTNERING WITH SUMMERFEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

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The phenomenological process of partnering a music therapy continuing education experience with a large music festival in June, 2022 is the focus of this paper. Summerfest is held over three consecutive weekends each summer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The festival features more than 800 acts and 1,000 performances on 12 stages (Milwaukee World Festival, 2023b). Another feature of the festival grounds is the Northwestern Mutual Community Park, featuring inclusive playground equipment with interactive musical themes (Milwaukee World Festival, 2023a).

The first two authors have experience with music therapy students working at a music festival. In 2018 they took undergraduate music therapy students to at an international folk festival and wanted a behind-the-scenes experience for working professionals. As contacts were made, it became apparent that a longer working relationship would be needed as the infrastructure for volunteering was different in Milwaukee. When sharing about music therapy with the organization's liaison, donation of tent along the perimeter of the children's community park became possible. Alverno College would host a training session for clinicians interested in professional development and supervision. The focus would be resource oriented practice through a commu-

nity lens with the festival goers and space establishing the community. Following pre-readings and presentations by DiMaio and Nelson the training took a similar approach with collaborative planning for materials and practices being established by two separate groups of participants. One group centered around teen and adult attendees and the other specifically addressed the community of children gathered on the playground at any given time.

The adult-focused group chose instruments like a keyboard, guitar, microphone, and world percussion. They created a QR code linked to a survey about the ways in which the individual connected to music in their lives. Between the live music jams and conversations, results indicated, perhaps not surprisingly, that adults attending the festival were either musicians themselves, or active listeners. Some reported attendance primarily because their children love music and wanted to stop by our booth; however, given the content and context of the festival, the authors interpreted these comments as deflection and shifted focus to the children. A number of adults re-visited the booth to have additional conversations about music and were encouraged to share their stories and make music with the clinicians.

Child and family were the focus of the second group, who stationed themselves for much of the time in the playground area under a metal canopy with music notes carved out for splashes of light in the welcoming shade. A variety of brightly colored melodic and rhythmic instruments as well as a few props, including scarves, were available. Children were drawn to the space whether to walk the perimeter and look, touch and go, or stay and play, sometimes for extended experiences with shifting players. Some parents and grandparents joined in and a several returned multiple times for more group musicing and respite from the din of the larger stages nearby. Data was collected regarding numbers of participants, activity type (playing, singing, dancing, composing, etc.), and duration of engagement. There were hundreds of people passing through and the supervisor recording data stepped in to create more, small musicing communities. Demand was great, leading to a feature story on the local news network (CBS 58, 2022).

Most importantly, music therapists participating in the experience received professional feedback on their therapeutic interaction and implementation of the theoretical underpinnings from the faculty. Participants reported learning a lot through the intensive immersive nature of the experience and would like a longer pre-service tutorial. Collaborating with the faculty to build an experiential music space for the festival attendees was identified as a highlight and a reason to do this again. Alverno College plans to offer this training for music therapists again in 2024.

References

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About the Authors

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