Lecture at the 1st International Ryodoraku Congress

Oct. 9, 1988 —Miyazaki—

Traditional Oriental Medicine and Music Therapy

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Abstract

Already the earliest documents of chinese medical literature prove that music was used for therapeutic purposes according to the rules of chinese medicine. Music therapy in Europe at a growing rate is being used in several different ways for the treatment of psychological and physical ailments. The elements of western music therapy can be used according to the pattern-diagnosis of traditional oriental medicine. A treatment by acupuncture and herbs among other methods can be combined with music therapy as a non verbal psychotherapy. There by music therapy may contribute to a holistic approach of healing, especially in circumstances, where classical psychotherapy is not convenient for culture-immanent or individual reasons.

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In the 30th. chapter of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Cannon we can read the following dialogue :

"Huang-di asks : when the Zu Yang Ming is diseased, then the patient avoids the fellow-man, is afraid of fire and fears the sound of wood, but does not fear the sound of a bell. Can you tell me the reason for this?

Ch'i Po answers :

The Zu Yang Ming, the stomach-meridian, corresponds to earth, earth hates wood. Therefore the patient fears the sound of wood..."

We want to take these lines as a point of departure today as we did in our work.

Music in the East and West since ancient times has been used as a complementary method to cure diseases, as documents from ancient China as well as from ancient Greece show us.

The Jesuits (*père Amiot 1776*), and *J. A. van Aalst (1884)* were the first to bring some detailed knowledge of chinese music to Europe. These authors and most importantly *Marcel Granet* with his publication "*La pensée chinoise*" from 1934 showed us the importance of music in chinese public life and its theoretical foundations in the daoist philosophy. He quotes *Chushi* : "for where music exercised, there comes clearness into social duties, ears and eyes gain the right sharpness, and between *xue* and *qi* there will establish a harmonious balance ; the morals change to the better and the whole world will accomplish peace".

Up to a few years ago there was euphoria about the holistic effects of acupuncture in Europe. According to most protagonists of acupuncture and chinese medicine (*Van Nghi, Chamfrault, Porkert and others*) acupuncture is supposed to have an all-over curing effect on both body and psyche. *Unschuld and Ots* have the merits to show us in Europe, that Chinese medicine is more than acupuncture and herbal therapy, even if for cultural and political reasons some psycho-orientated healing-methods are not part of the official medical cannon.

our approach was as follows : How can we use a psyche-orientated method of healing, i. e. take the psychosomatic pathway to complement the somato-psychic approach of acupuncture and herb-therapy.

Hideo Seki from the Tokai University in Tokyo from the studies of sophrology and suggestopedia as well as electrostimulation in acupuncture suggested that the effects of music on body and mind take the pathways of acupuncture meridians. He thinks of receptive musictherapy, i. e. the patient only listens to music.

The kind of musictherapy (according to Nordoff-Robbins) that we use in an “*active, producing method*”, i. e. therapist and patient play together, the former usually on the piano, the latter usually on percussive instruments like drums, cymbals, chimes and xylophones. In his reaction to the music the patient shows his limitations and potentials, given by his physical or psychological problem. He does not show the reason for his problem, but *how* he is. By means of a directed kind of musical improvisation the patient developpes a new kind of feeling for himself : New ways of expression, movement and relating himself to his social context.

His musical exprssion will show certain characteristic patterns according to his ailment, which will lead to a “musical diagnosis”. These musical patterns we related to the patterns of traditional oriental medicine.

We took the elements of western music-therapy, i. e. the instruments and the musical parameters as tempo, dynamic, volume, tonality, modus and character of the music and related them to the five transformation-phases of traditional oriental medicine.

The correspondence of the instruments was based on the system of the 8 basic sound-bodies of chinese tradition : The sound of the *skin*-the drum ; the *calebasse*-the sheng ; the *bamboo*-the flute ; the sound of *wood*-the Ou or Chou ; the sound of *silk*-the Qin ; the sound of the *earth*-the xuen, the ocarina ; the sound of *metal*-Zhong, the bell ; the sound of *stone*-the ching.

Table 1 shows the correspondence of the commonly used western instruments and their correspondences to the five phases, as derived from these basic sound-bodies.

Table 2 to 6 show the correspondence of musical expression of tempo and dynamic to the five phases, in a healthy state, an overactive state and a state of weakness. In this way the musical expression contributes to a “musical diagnosis”.

Table 7 shows the correspondence of the flexibility of tempo and dynamic to normal and pathological qualities of experience.

We did not at all use a rigid correspondence of single notes or scales to the phases or meridians like we can find in the chinese tradition of the pentatonic or semidiatonic scales because this would hinder the spontaneous expression.

We do believe that the use of specific instruments and specific musical techniques accord-

ing to the diagnosis will enhance the effect of the therapy and contribute to a holistic healing by covering the psychosomatic pathway.

There will be time only to show one short example :

A young man, 22 years old, with neurotic depressive disturbance, having committed several attempts of suicide.

He is rather talented but has no personal and professional orientation, lacks self-confidence and courage and willpower, is intolerant to any kind of criticism, which demolishes him at the slightest occasion. He has difficulty relating to other people.

By chance there was found a disturbance of liver-metabolism, a kind of hereditary hyperbilirubinemia, which is suspected to coincide with this kind of emotional disturbances.

The *diagnosis* of this patient was : vacuity of liver, especially of liver-Yang [anxiety, fearfulness according to Su-wen, self-pity, mimosa-like behavior according to Gleditsch] , possibly based on a kidney-vacuity in the psychological sense : lack of emotional "structure", lack of willpower, fear, insecurity.

These characteristics show up in his musical expression : he lacks musical initiative and creativity, there is lack of dynamism and security, his beats on drums and melody-instruments are percussive without expression. His body-expression is poor and rigid, he refuses singing, a musical dialogue is very difficult.

Therapeutically there have to be attempts to develop musical dialogues, create musical tensions, and encourage both more "daring" expression, and even aggression.

The therapy begins with drums, which relate to water-phase, and which with their clear beat give structure to the musical expression. Drums also mediate communication and expansion, which are lacking in a weak liver. moreover one will use percussive wood-instruments (like wood-blocks, xylophones) which, with their precise beat and sound, will tonify liver. Metal-instruments with their "carpet-like" sound will not be very suitable, as they lack precision. This particular patient by the way did not like to play on metal-instruments, which after one attempt were not used again. In analogy to the Su-wen one could say : when the Zu-Jue-yin is disease, the patient fears the sound of the bell.

A short summary : The use of music therapy can complement needle and herb-therapy in psychological and psychosomatic disorders, but also in the rehabilitation of neurological lesions as a means of psycho-motoric reeducation. The music can be used in the spirit of the traditional diagnosis. The problem at this state is the nonpredictability and non-reproducibility of the results of a certain intervention, the same problem we meet in classical acupuncture. An evaluation of the effects for instance of wood-instruments on wood-phase and metal-instruments on metal-phase, etc., and of all the other musical parameters will be done.

INSTRUMENTS					
Lesser Difficulty	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
	xylophone woodblocks temple-blocks wooden clappers castanets	toy harp psaltery "one-string-violin" "one-string-violon" "one-string-cello"	ocarina voice	cymbals - small cymbal - big cymbal - hand-cymbal - finger-cymbal metallophone chime-bars gong handbells bell triangle	drums: snare-drum hand-drum base-drum tambourine kettle-drum bongo conga maracas
Higher Difficulty	recorder (wooden flute) clarinet oboe	cither-cithara lyre guitar violin viola violoncello double bass		transverse-flute trumpet saxophone tube	

Table 1 : Common instruments in correspondence to the five transformation -phases

PHASE	HEALTHY		OVERACTIVE	WEAK
Wood	Fast Tempo	activation, alertness buoyancy, playfulness, fervor	Tenseness, overexcitation unrestrained drive	Tenseness
	Slow Tempo			insecurity, confusion, listless- ness, lethargy, slow functioning, lack of motor vigor, weak drive Resistiveness: avoidance of "ac- tive contact"
	Loud Dynamic	animation, enthusiasm, exuber- ance, assertive freedom, confi- dence	agression, frustration, anger, lack of impulse control, emotio- nal -motor discharge, non-respon- sive assertiveness Resistiveness: "shutting out" (therapeut and music)	Tenseness
	Soft Dynamic	lightness, suspense		listlessness, apathy, remoteness, unawareness, inhibition

Table 2 : Dynamic and tempo in correspondence to transformation-phase Wood (Liver/ Gallbladder)

PHASE		HEALTHY	OVERACTIVE	WEAK
Fire	Fast Tempo	activation, joyfulness, gaiety buoyancy, playfulness, fervor	nervousness, overexcitation anxiety, fear	nervousness, frightfulness
	Slow Tempo	attentiveness		
	Loud Dynamic	animation, enthusiasm, exuberance		
	Soft Dynamic			listlessness, apathy,

Table 3 : Dynamic and tempo in correspondence to transformation-phase Fire (Heart)

PHASE		HEALTHY	OVERACTIVE	WEAK
Earth	Fast Tempo		obsessiveness, compulsiveness	desorientation
	Slow Tempo	calmness, ease, seriousness thoughtfulness, conscientiousness deliberateness, certainty, affirmation, warmth		overcarefulness, despondency
	Loud Dynamic		obsessiveness, compulsiveness	
	Soft Dynamic	carefulness, intentness, active participation		overcarefulness, despondency

Table 4 : Dynamic and tempo in correspondence to transformation-phase Earth (Spleen)

PHASE		HEALTHY	OVERACTIVE	WEAK
Metal	Fast Tempo			
	Slow Tempo			despondency, depression, disinterest, sadness
	Loud Dynamic			
	Soft Dynamic	gentleness, carefulness, lightness, delicacy		inhibition, apathy, sadness

Table 5 : Dynamic and tempo in correspondence to transformation-phase Metal (Lungs)

PHASE	HEALTHY	OVERACTIVE	WEAK
Water	Fast Tempo	confidence	resistiveness: "running away"
	Slow Tempo	certainty, warmth	insecurity, confusion, despondency, depression, vacuity
	Loud Dynamic	confidence	
	Soft Dynamic	fear, anxiety, inhibition	

Table 6 : Dynamic and tempo in correspondence to transformation-phase Water (Kidney)

	crescendo	diminuendo	accelerando	ritardando
normal musical experience	expansion exuberance self-confidence climactic fulfillment growing, development	subtlety gentleness inner participation	playfulness happy excitement fervor	calmness certainty attentiveness deliberateness
pathologically determined musical expression	emotional-motor-discharge lack of impuls-control frustration	listlessness fear anxiety unawareness remoteness	nervousness hyperactivity unrestrained drive	lack of motor vigor weak drive despondency insecurity

Table 7 : Flexibility of dynamic and tempo and their corresponding qualities of experience