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Meaningful Moments in Music Therapy Improvisation

A thesis presented to fulfill the requirements for the degree of

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Fiona Robyn Shaw

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate moments that were deemed to be meaningful for the clients involved, within music therapy improvisation in the researcher's clinical work. The purpose of this was to gain a greater understanding of the processes that took place during these moments. The qualitative study employed a naturalistic inquiry approach which focused on four meaningful moments involving client participants from two contrasting settings: adults with mental illness at a Community Mental Health Centre and a pre-school child with developmental delay and her mother at an Early Intervention Centre.

The study collected three main sources of data: transcripts of a discussion with peer participants, the researcher's clinical notes and the musical notations regarding the moments. Two music therapy students acted as peer participants. They viewed the recordings of the four moments and commented on what they thought was happening in terms of the music and interactions. The transcript of this discussion, along with the researcher's clinical notes, were analysed in two stages to find the essence of what was happening in the moments.

Three primary analytic categories were identified and a number of common themes were found within them by comparing and contrasting the findings. The study concluded that the meaningful moments were made up of three essential elements: a) the music; b) the emotional content; and c) the therapist's interaction.

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&

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This study received ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (HEC: PN application – 05/59) and the Central Regional Ethics Committee (CEN/05/09/068).

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