

THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF KING DAVID'S MUSIC IN 1 SAMUEL 16:14-23 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MUSICIANS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the therapeutic aspects of King David's music as portrayed in 1 Samuel 16:14-23, examining its potential inferences and application for the contemporary Christian Musician, in which music is not limited, but includes all of its forms, whether instrumental or vocal, drawing on biblical and historical sources. The paper argues that David's music had a profound impact on King Saul's mental well-being and posits that similar therapeutic benefits can be harnessed by Christian musicians today.

Keywords: Music therapy, King David's Music, Therapeutic effects, Christian musicians

Introduction

The power of music to influence human emotions and psychology has been recognized throughout history and across cultures. Music is an important part of worship, meditation, and spiritual development in the Christian tradition. King David's music in 1 Samuel 16:14-23 offers valuable insights into the therapeutic potential of music and its relevance for Christian musicians today (Hennenberg, et al., 2023, 14). Saul, who had fallen out of God's favour, was troubled by an evil spirit. Recognizing the therapeutic power of music, Saul's advisors recommended finding a skilled musician to play for him. They learned of David, a young man from Bethlehem known for his musical talent and courage. David was introduced to King Saul as a skilled musician who played the lyre. He was to provide comfort and relief from the distress caused by an evil spirit that tormented the king. Whenever the distressing spirit came upon him, David played the lyre which had a therapeutic effect on Saul, soothing his troubled spirit (Delcamp, 2013). Saul grew to love David and appointed him as his armor-bearer. David's role as a musician showcases the power of music bringing emotional and spiritual solace and also demonstrating how his musical talents played a significant role in alleviating Saul's suffering.

David's musical role went beyond entertainment; when he played, it had a soothing and profound impact on Saul's wellbeing. The music distracted Saul from his torment, provided emotional relief, and even led to his physical relaxation. This demonstrated the potential of music as a therapeutic tool. Furthermore, this narrative also foreshadows David's future significance in Israel's history, setting the stage for his anointing as king and emphasizing the spiritual connection between music and divine intervention. This paper examines the concept of Music therapy, attempts an exposition of 1 Samuel 16:14-23, highlights the therapeutic effects of King David's music and its implications for Christians Musicians who engage in both instrumental and vocal music.

The Concept of Music Therapy

Music therapy is the intentional use of music and musical experiences by a professional music therapist to enrich human life; alleviate human suffering; enhance physical, cognitive, emotional, and social functioning; and promote processes of normal development and self-actualization (Aigen, 1991). Music therapists work with individuals, with and without disabilities, in private sessions, small groups, and community contexts.

Music therapy is practiced globally with professional associations devoted to its advancement in over 40 countries. In many of the countries with a professional infrastructure devoted to music therapy, music therapists are eligible to receive licenses and certifications that are recognized by various governmental agencies. For example, in the USA, music therapists can earn board certification by passing a national certifying examination and obtain various licenses as counselors and psychotherapists on a state-by-state basis. "Music therapy is a systematic process of intervention wherein the therapist helps the client to promote health, using experiences and the relationships that develop through them as dynamic forces of change" (Bruscia 1998: 20).

In many countries, music therapy is a recognized clinical discipline with well-evidenced benefits to people with disabilities, emotional difficulties, mental health difficulties and a wide variety of special needs (Dileo, 1993). Music therapy is now a truly international practice, with developments in South America, Africa, Asia and Australia are as vital as those in the United States and Europe: There are now sixty one (61) music therapy associations across Europe, some more focused on professionalization than others, sometimes more than one in any particular country. Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, Analytical Music Therapy, Benenzon Music Therapy, The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music, and Behavioural Music Therapy represent the "Five International Models of Music Therapy Practice," which were defined and presented at the 1999 World Congress in Washington D.C. To contemporize this list we could add Neurologic Music Therapy (Hurt-Thaut & Johnson, 2015) and Community Music Therapy (Stige et al., 2010). There is great variety within these different ways of working with regard to the emphasis placed on active participation, receptive (listening) techniques and improvisation, as well as differences in the music therapist's role. What they do all have in common is the underlying belief in the power of music to affect us on a deep level, regardless of illness or disability (Dasgupta & Majumdar, 2014).

According to the World Federation of Music Therapy: "Music therapy is the professional use of music and its elements as an intervention in medical, educational, and everyday environments with individuals, groups, families, or communities who seek to optimize their quality of life and improve their physical, social, communicative, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health and wellbeing. Research, practice, education, and clinical training in music therapy are based on professional standards according to cultural, social, and political contexts" (World Federation of Music Therapy, 2016).

Music therapy is a specialized form of therapeutic intervention that utilizes music as a powerful tool to address a wide range of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals (Smith, Cassey, Johnson, Gwede, & Riffin, 2001). This innovative approach is implemented by highly-trained and credentialed music therapists who employ a diverse array of musical techniques and interventions to achieve specific therapeutic goals for their clients. Whether it's using music to help individuals reduce stress and anxiety, improve their mood and overall well-being, or enhance their communication skills and social interactions, music therapy has been proven to be an effective and transformative healing modality (Stanczyk, 2011). Through music, individuals can tap into their innate creativity, express themselves in new ways, and find greater connection with themselves and others. With its unique ability to evoke deep emotions and memories, music therapy has emerged as a valuable resource for those seeking holistic healing solutions that promote mind-body wellness.

The concept of music therapy is based on the idea that music has the power to affect a person's mood, emotions, and cognitive functions. Music therapy has been introduced primarily to relieve symptoms such as anxiety and pain, side effects of chemotherapy, and radiation therapy (Cooper & Foster, 2008). It can provide a means of expression for those who may have difficulty communicating through traditional forms of talk therapy. Music therapy can be tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals across a wide range of ages and abilities (Clerk, Isaacks-Downtown, Wells et al., 2006).

Doctors worldwide are gradually discovering that music therapy has vast potential in influencing both the mind and body. Pritchard comments that music therapy has its roots in the entertainers who played for wounded soldiers in World War II. Music helped these soldiers recover faster. In the same way, the veteran Administration

began using music therapy in hospitals as they discovered that patients who listened to certain kinds of Music were less depressive and more sociable. It is widely used now to treat cancer patients, autistic children and alcohol and drug abusers (Pritchard, 2000).

Psychology Today in 1985 also reported that in Great Britain in a certain mental hospital, the patients in the wing that was hearing the sound of hymn singing got better faster than patient in the other wings. These testimonies attest the therapeutic power in Music (Pritchard, 2000)

The various aspects of music therapy include:

Individualized Approach: Music therapists assess each client's needs and design personalized interventions to address their specific goals, which may include improving emotional well-being, cognitive function, physical coordination, or social skills (O'Callaghan, Sexton, & Wheeler, 2007).

Multimodal: Music therapy can involve a variety of musical elements, including playing instruments, singing, listening to music, composing, and improvising. It can also integrate other therapeutic techniques like movement or relaxation exercises.

Clinical Application: Music therapy is used in a clinical setting by qualified music therapists. These professionals have completed specific training and education in music therapy techniques, along with clinical internships.

Evidence-Based Practice: The field of music therapy is supported by research that demonstrates its effectiveness in various therapeutic contexts. It's used in diverse settings such as hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers, and mental health facilities.

Wide Range of Applications: Music therapy can be applied to address a broad spectrum of issues, including stress reduction, pain management, emotional expression, cognitive rehabilitation, speech and language development, and social skill enhancement.

Inclusive and Accessible: Music therapy can be adapted to accommodate individuals with different abilities, including those with physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments. It's a flexible approach that can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse populations.

Ethical Considerations: Music therapists adhere to a code of ethics that emphasizes the well-being and autonomy of clients. They maintain confidentiality and uphold professional standards in their practice.

Overall, music therapy harnesses the inherent power of music to support individuals in achieving their therapeutic goals and improving their overall quality of life. It is a holistic approach that recognizes the profound impact music can have on the mind, body, and spirit.

Exposition of 1 Samuel 16:14-23

The Spirit of God departed from Saul because of his deliberate disobedience to God. In the Old Testament God often sent his spirit to specific people and for specific purposes or tasks. The Spirit was not permanently or universally in dwelling as it is today. In John 14:17 Jesus tells the apostles in the upper room. "But you know him (the Holy spirit) for he lives with you and will be with you". Saul's case was a direct judgment from God (Pritchard, 2000).

Pritchard cites Keil and Delitsch commentary which explains that Saul's case was not merely depression as a result of rejection, but a higher evil power taking possession of his entire being, which at times drove him into madness. Saul had given way to the evil already within. When the Spirit of God was with him, there was 'fear, paranoia, jealousy and violent rage' but such impulse were largely checked until the Spirit of God left him and 'he lost rational control' (Pritchard, 2000).

In verse 15 of the text, Saul's servants discovered that their master the king, was being tormented by a harmful spirit from God and they requested for a skillful man-a musician who could play the lyre. In verse 17, Saul himself said to

his servants. "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me". In verse 18, one of the young men recommended 'a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, 'a man of valor', 'a man of war' 'prudent in speech and a man of good presence' and 'the Lord is with him'. David, a great musician was not only skillful in playing the lyre but entitled himself "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" on his death bed (1 Samuel, 23:1). His heart was alive to God. He was a courageous fighter (1 Samuel 17:34-36) who had learned to depend on God for strength.

In verse 19-22, David came to Saul and began his work as a music minister filled with God's Spirit and presence. He was amiable and Saul loved him greatly and made him his armour bearer. He found favour in Saul's sight. In verse 23, David put his skill into play backed up by the spirit of God. His music ministry was therapeutic as it brought a refreshing to Saul and calmed him down as the evil spirit departed from him each time he played the lyre. It is important to note that music alone without the backing of the Spirit of God cannot bring holistic healing. According to Matthew Henry (2023) , If God and his grace do not rule us; 'Sin and Satan will have possession of us'. This implies that only the blood of Jesus applied in faith as the Christian musician plays their music whether instrumental or vocal, can effectively dispel religious melancholy or bring complete healing.

Meuhlenberg cites Robert Bergen who comments that "Saul's tortured state was not an accident of nature, nor was it essentially a medical condition. It was a supernatural assault by a being sent at the Lord's command and it was brought on by Saul's disobedience" (Meuhlenberg, 2014).

The Therapeutic Effects of King David's Music

King David's music in 1 Samuel 16:14-23 had several therapeutic effects on Saul. Some of these are highlights as follows:

Spiritual Deliverance: David's music brought deliverance to Saul as the evil spirit departed from him. His spirit was uplifted through the music which was an expression of faith and connection with God.

Physical deliverance: Saul benefited physical deliverance through David's music (Brown, Driver and Briggs, 2004, 129) as it brought relief from his physical agony (Willem, 1997) Music has the ability to reduce physiological stress responses such as lowered heart rate and decreased muscle tension; this because it produces emotional responses (Olajide, 2021,43). David music must have contributed to Saul's physical relaxation, aiding his overall well-being.

Mental healing: the act of engaging with music through playing of instruments, singing or listening can stimulate the endorphins and neurotransmitters associated with pleasure and relaxation. Saul experienced psychological relief through David's music. Studies have shown that the right kind of music has the power to relieve mental suffering (Leonard, 1949).

Distraction from Torment: Saul's attention was diverted from the torment caused by the harmful spirit. This diversionary effect demonstrates how appropriate music especially such inspired by the Holy Spirit and the word of God can divert negative thoughts or emotions to godly and positive thoughts that enhance deliverance.

Cathartic Expression: Music can serve as a means of emotional expression and release. David's music may have provided Saul with an outlet for pent-up emotions and allowed him to process his inner turmoil.

Sense of Connection: Through the act of playing music for Saul, David established a personal connection with him. This sense of human connection can be a powerful source of comfort and support in times of distress.

Implications of David's Music for Christian Musicians

The implications of the therapeutic effects of King David's music as drawn from 1 Samuel 16:14-23, are multifaceted and offer valuable insights for those involved in creating music within a Christian context. These are:

- i. **Recognition of Music's Therapeutic Potential:** Christian musicians should acknowledge the profound impact that music can have on the human spirit, recognizing it as a potential tool for providing comfort, solace, and healing.

- ii. **Spiritual Sensitivity and Connection:** David's music was an expression of his faith and connection with God. This highlights the importance for Christian musicians to infuse their music with spiritual depth, seeking to inspire and uplift the listener's faith.
- iii. **Understanding Music as a Form of Ministry:** David's music ministered to Saul's emotional and spiritual needs. This serves as a model for Christian musicians to view their craft as a form of ministry, with the potential to impact individuals on a deep spiritual level.
- iv. **Responsibility for Ethical Use of Musical Gifts:** David's music was employed ethically and responsibly to aid Saul, showcasing the need for Christian musicians to use their talents for positive and edifying purposes, rather than exploiting them for personal gain or harmful intentions.
- v. **Diversity of Musical Expression:** David's skill with the lyre demonstrates the diverse ways in which music can be used for therapeutic purposes. This encourages Christian musicians to explore a wide range of musical styles with voice and/or musical instruments to effectively minister to diverse audiences.
- vi. **Recognition of God's Sovereignty in Music:** David's ability to soothe Saul was attributed to God's presence with him. This reminds Christian musicians to humbly acknowledge that their musical gifts are ultimately a result of God's providence.
- vii. **Compassion and Empathy in Musical Ministry:** David's willingness to serve Saul through music exemplifies a spirit of compassion and empathy. Christian musicians should approach their craft with a genuine desire to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of their listeners.
- viii. **Fulfillment of a Purpose Beyond Entertainment:** David's music served a higher purpose of providing therapeutic relief and ministering to Saul's spirit, transcending mere entertainment. Christian musicians should aspire to create music that transcends superficial enjoyment, aiming to touch the hearts and souls of their audience.
- ix. **Sensitivity to the Needs of Others:** Saul's advisors recognized his distress and proposed a solution. This highlights the importance of Christian musicians being attuned to the emotional and spiritual needs of their community and being willing to use their talents to address them.
- x. **Knowledge of Audience in context:** David recognized his audience and played appropriate music to meet the need of his audience. Christian musicians should appropriately channel their music to fulfill the right purpose to every audience with the knowledge that music is purposeful.

1 Samuel 16:14-23 provides Christian musicians with a biblical example of how music can be used for therapeutic, spiritual, and ministerial purposes. It encourages musicians to approach their ministry with a sense of responsibility, humility, skillfulness and a deep understanding of the potential impact their music can have on individual lives.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the therapeutic effects of King David's music as exemplified in 1 Samuel 16: 14-23 and its implications for Contemporary Christian musicians. Quality and purposeful music, that will transcend the physical to affect the emotions and the spirit of humankind in the positively, exudes from a Christian Musician who is skillful in playing instruments or singing; brave, prudent in speech and carries the presence of the Lord (1 Sam. 16:18). These highlighted qualities of King David made his music to have therapeutic effects on Saul. Christian musicians therefore are enjoined to learn from the exemplary life of David to impact lives for an effective music ministry.

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