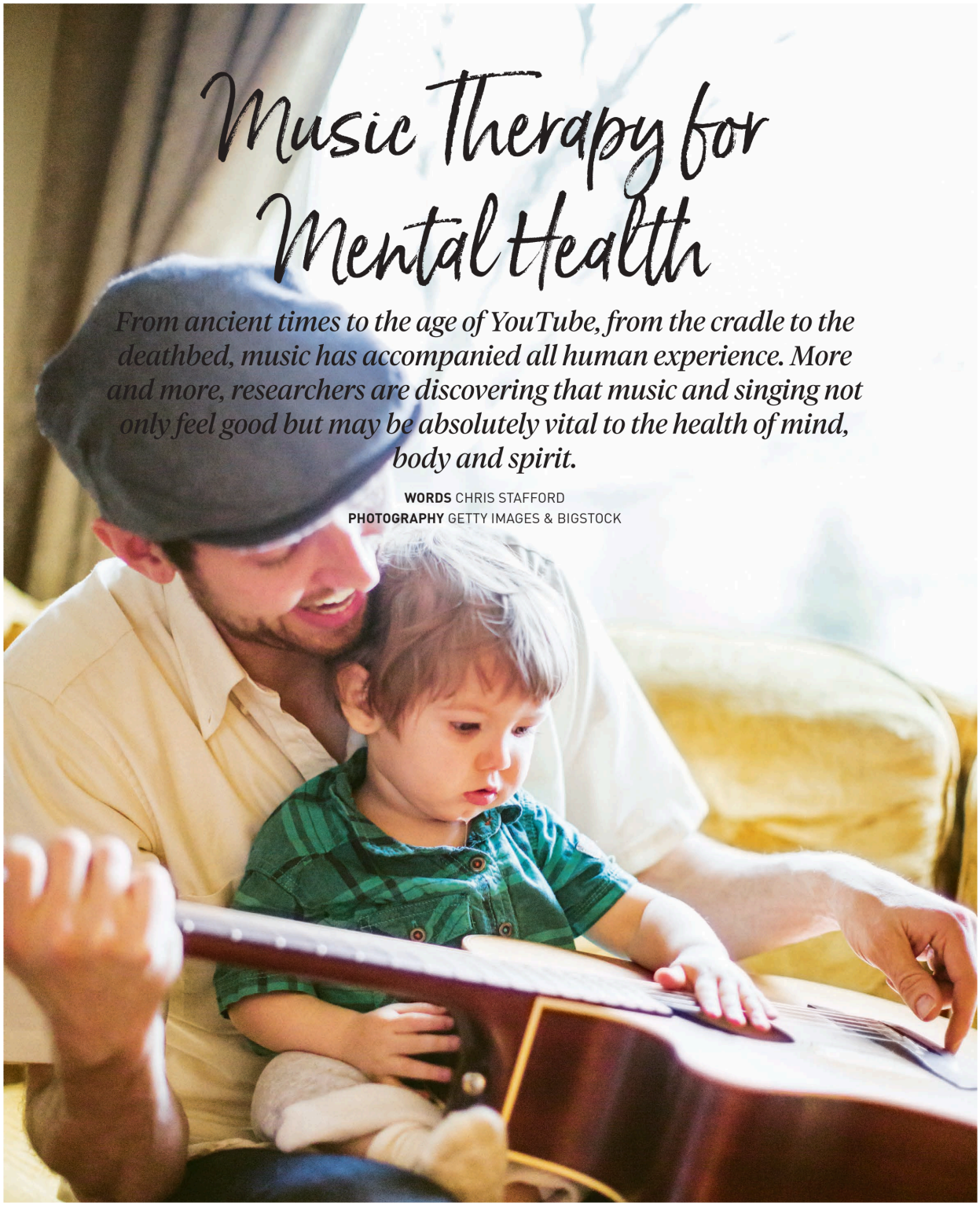
- Music therapy / Mental health

WellBeing | special report MUSIC & HEALTH



Music Therapy for Mental Health

From ancient times to the age of YouTube, from the cradle to the deathbed, music has accompanied all human experience. More and more, researchers are discovering that music and singing not only feel good but may be absolutely vital to the health of mind, body and spirit.

WORDS CHRIS STAFFORD
PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES & BIGSTOCK



Eno's group-sing songlist

Can't Help Falling In Love
Love Me Tender
Keep on the Sunny Side
Sixteen Tons
Will the Circle Be Unbroken
Dream
If I Had a Hammer
Love Hurts
I'll Fly Away
Down by the Riverside
Chapel of Love
Wild Mountain Thyme
Que Sera, Sera
Cotton Fields
Source: NPR

"Without music, life would be a mistake." ~ Friedrich Nietzsche

If I were to tell you that music is good for you, you'd probably regard that as an assertion so self-evident as to be beyond discussion. Who hasn't felt the joy and solace of music let alone seen the uninhibited way children react to it, singing and dancing, as the saying goes, as if no one's watching? Scientists have even observed unborn infants responding in a similar fashion.

My granddaughter was exposed to music in utero — in particular, a Dean Martin CD that was then in high rotation at our place. In her early years, we never had any problem getting her to sleep as Dino would do the job for us. (The one exception, for some reason, was *Volare*; we had to skip over that track because it made her cry.)

Some years ago there was a photo shoot at this publishing company involving a large group of babies and toddlers. The photographer was having a lot of trouble wrangling the wriggling infants until someone had the idea to go searching for some music. Bach was a bit helpful but the one CD that soothed the babies was an album by western swing band, Asleep at the Wheel.

It turns out English conductor John Lubbock, whose acclaimed Orchestra of St John's has performed concerts for more than 35,000 autistic children over the past decade, has also discovered the calming, joyful effect of 2/4 time, the prevailing metre of country music and traditional songs in general.

As well as running his Music for Autism charity, Lubbock organises concerts for dementia patients and even started a choir at Huntercombe Prison in Oxfordshire. As he told the London *Telegraph*, "These guys have plenty of time — and energy. And singing is the most wonderful therapy."

Preaching to the choir

"If I cannot fly, let me sing." ~ Stephen Sondheim

In the beginning was the voice, the musical instrument available to us all. Writes composer Andrew Ford, host of Radio National's *The*

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Music Show, "Singing is the start of music, its most common manifestation and, arguably, its most sublime expression. By singing, we make ourselves physically part of music and music part of us."

Song almost certainly predates speech and still moves us in a primal way: ask anyone who has discovered the joys of singing in a choir. For Mary Bruce, a frenetically busy civil celebrant on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, choir practice nights are simply her "sanity".

Research confirms it really is good for you. By monitoring the vital signs of the members of a choir, Björn Vickhoff at Sweden's University of Gothenburg discovered the singers' heart rates soon became synchronised. This is related to an effect known as respiratory sinus arrhythmia, where the heartbeat varies in synchrony with breathing. Research on meditation has established this has soothing effects similar to those that come from breathing exercises in yoga.

Singing also releases endorphins, dopamine and serotonin, hormones associated with feelings of pleasure, as well as oxytocin, a chemical that manages stress and enhances trust and bonding, thus countering depression and loneliness. Ohio State music professor David Huron suggests singing may generate prolactin, a consoling hormone present in nursing women (as well as in tears of sorrow). Singers have been found to have lower levels of cortisol, another indicator of lowered stress. And study after study has found that singing relieves anxiety and that group singing can be especially beneficial to the health and wellbeing of older adults.

Choral singing can range from the ethereal pastel tones of boy sopranos through the chirpy fugues of the Swingle Singers all the way to the earthy, urgent and, yes, even dangerous sounds of the Southern gospel choir. The sweaty intensity of the experience can result in physical breakdown, as I once witnessed in Memphis, Tennessee, where I saw a gospel chorister fall into a quivering, twitching swoon.

At the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the gospel tent puffed and billowed joyously all day like a cartoony big-top as choir after choir and one stunning soloist after another testified. To drop in occasionally for a shot of sanctified rhythm and blues was like a bracing tonic in the wilting heat of the Louisiana spring. It's doubtful there were better singers among the festival's big names than the unknown vocalists in the gospel tent.

This is music to Tony Backhouse's ears. Now resident in Napier in his native New Zealand, the choirmaster spent three decades in Australia founding and working with gospel choral groups, from the a cappella quartet The Elevators to the much-praised larger aggregations Cafe of the Gate of Salvation and The Honeybees. He has worked extensively with gospel choirs in the US as well as completing a graduate course in ethnomusicology at the University of Memphis.

"If I were asked to redesign the British educational system, I would start by insisting that group singing become a central part of the daily routine. I believe it builds character and, more than anything else, encourages a taste for co-operation with others."

For him, the essence of ensemble singing is "collaboration, rather than competition. Singing teaches us to listen, which is a great gift. In my community choir in Napier, even though I'm notionally the boss, it's about creating something fabulous together — and, as by choice we rarely perform, we really aim to make every rehearsal a thing of joy and beauty.

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Children exposed to music tuition over a period of years displayed superior reading skills compared with their peers who received no musical training.

"It's similar to how my African-American Baptist friends in the US treat a rehearsal or any event that involves singing, whether there's an audience or not: it's another opportunity for worship, for having a good time. So every choir rehearsal brings us closer together as community, elevates us, nourishes us. There are nights when even I don't feel like going to choir but by the time we've finished I'm exhilarated and glad I came.

"A psychologist friend once said to me, 'I envy you your job — you get to see people at their best.' I can dig that and I see that, in singing, we can go beyond our egos, travails and agendas to a realm where we are present, focused, creative, neighbourly. Loving.

"Eno says it better than anyone," he adds. He's talking about Brian Eno, who first came to prominence as a founding member of the band Roxy Music before going on to produce records (Talking Heads, U2) while experimenting with electronics and the avant-garde. Yet, like Tony, he's fascinated by a cappella (unaccompanied) singing — in particular, the vocal purity of the simple harmonies of gospel and blues — and utterly convinced of its benefits.

Only half-jokingly, Eno once told America's public broadcaster NPR, "I believe that singing is the key to long life, a good figure, a stable temperament, increased intelligence, new friends, super self-confidence, heightened sexual attractiveness and a better sense of humour." But he claims the benefits of group singing are profound:

- **Physiological:** "You use your lungs in a way that you probably don't for the rest of your day, breathing deeply and openly."
- **Psychological:** "Singing aloud leaves you with a sense of levity and contentedness."
- **Societal:** "A capella singing is all about the immersion of the self into the community. That's one of the great feelings — to stop being me for a little while and to become us. That way lies empathy, the great social virtue."

Echoing Australian conductor and music educator Richard Gill (see *WellBeing* #166),

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Eno concludes, "If I were asked to redesign the British educational system, I would start by insisting that group singing become a central part of the daily routine. I believe it builds character and, more than anything else, encourages a taste for co-operation with others. This seems to be about the most important thing a school could do for you."

As no less a singer than Luciano Pavarotti put it, "If children are not introduced to music at an early age, I believe something fundamental is actually being taken from them."

Child's play

"I would teach children music, physics and philosophy; but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all arts are the keys to learning." ~ Plato

The case for music instruction and its importance in child development is worth restating — and not just for its social benefits but also for its effect on the brain itself as well as the flow-on to other areas of learning.

As Richard Gill told *WellBeing*, "Unless a child has access to good, sequential, thorough music education, that child is not being educated and therefore ... is being deprived of a sense of joy and a sense of wellbeing."

More, that child may be deprived of optimum brain development. Just look at the findings of researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, who discovered that the cerebellums of expert male musicians were 5 per cent larger than in those without musical training.

"Undeniably, there is a biology of music," asserts Harvard neurobiologist Mark Jude Tramo. For him it's self-evident that there's specialisation within the brain for the processing of music, making it as much a biological imperative as one of aesthetics. In fact, researchers have found music affected neural activity no matter where in the brain they looked — whether in the primitive regions found in animals or in the more recently evolved areas such as the frontal lobes. In addition, harmony, melody and rhythm each invoke a distinct pattern of brain activity.

In 2012, neuroscientists at the University of Southern California began a five-year study of the effects of music education. The focus of the program, said lead author Assal Habibi, was "the impact of music training on cognitive, socio-emotional and brain development of children". The subjects, 37 children from underprivileged neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, studied instruments such as the violin and learned to play in orchestras and groups. Their progress was monitored with various tools including MRI brain scans, EEGs to track electrical activity in the brain, behavioural testing and so on.

Initial results showed that such instruction sped up the maturation of the auditory pathway

Your brain on music

When a musician plays, almost the entire nervous system is at play as well. No wonder researchers advocate a return to music education in schools.

"Playing a musical instrument involves multiple components of the central (brain and spinal cord) and peripheral (nerves outside the brain and spinal cord) nervous systems. As a musician plays an instrument, motor systems in the brain control both gross and fine movements needed to produce sound. The sound is processed by auditory circuitry, which in turn can adjust signalling by the motor control centres.

"In addition, sensory information from the fingers, hands and arms is sent to the brain for processing. If the musician is reading music, visual information is sent to the brain for processing and interpreting commands for the motor centres. And, of course, the brain processes emotional responses to the music as well!"

Source: Portland Chamber Orchestra

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Playing music has positive outcomes in the relief of depression.

in the brain and increased its efficiency. This enhanced maturity reflects an increase in neuroplasticity, a physiological change in the brain in response to its environment.

An even longer-term study, published in the journal *Psychology of Music* in 2009, showed that children exposed to music tuition over a period of years displayed superior reading skills compared with their peers who received no musical training. In fact, several studies have established links between music education and enhanced abilities in other domains including linguistic, mathematical and spatial.

In this particular study, authors Joseph M Piro and Camilo Ortiz of Long Island University set out to demonstrate that students given keyboard instruction and training in increasingly complex rhythmic, tonal and practical skills would demonstrate "better performance on measures of vocabulary and verbal sequencing" than students who received no keyboard instruction.

Piro and Ortiz found specific similarities in the way individuals interpret music and language: "Because neural response to music is a widely distributed system within the brain, it would not be unreasonable to expect that some processing networks for music and language behaviours, namely reading, located in both hemispheres of the brain, would overlap."

Music as medicine

"Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast."
~ William Congreve

Everyone knows Congreve's famous line (though all too often Shakespeare gets the credit) but Civil War general and US senator John A Logan put it even more succinctly: "Music is the medicine of the mind."

We've already talked about the agreeable effects of music in our discussions of singing and playing, but the same benefits can be derived from just listening. The feel-good factor, again, is dopamine, the hormone that causes those chills and goosebumps when you hear an especially appealing passage of music. The subject of more than 100,000 research papers over the past 60 years, dopamine is a neurotransmitter that not only

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affects heart rate and blood pressure but also plays a big part in mood, attention, sleep and sexual gratification as well as in reward-based learning. Incidentally, dopamine has also been connected to drug addiction, Parkinson's, ADHD and schizophrenia.

Music not only echoes the beating of the heart; it also does it good. A landmark British study led by Professor Peter Sleight at Oxford University found that music with 10-second repeating cycles is particularly calming as it helps focus the body's natural rhythms. It's apparent that composers have known this intuitively for some time because the study cites sections of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Puccini's slower arias from *Turandot* and many of the works of Verdi as helping to reduce blood pressure.

As Boris Martinac, head of the Mechanosensory Biophysics Laboratory at Sydney's Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, explains, "Every beat of the heart, every pulse, is sent to the brain: a report on the state of the blood pressure. But also from the brain there is a signal sent back to the arteries [that] regulate blood pressure and the heart to basically keep it under control. And because this signal is sent down two pathways, they are out of phase — and every 10 seconds they come into phase."

While listening to music can be immensely soothing and pleasurable, playing music — as with singing — has positive outcomes in the relief of depression as well as the reduction of stress on both the emotional and the molecular level. In addition, studies have shown that adults who play music produce higher levels of human growth hormone (HgH), necessary for regulating body composition, body fluids, muscle and bone growth, sugar and fat metabolism, and possibly heart function.

Since the dawn of time, music has accompanied almost all human activity. It has been used for ceremonial and devotional purposes; it has induced trances, marked celebrations, aided concentration, provided motivation and been, most often, a balm for the soul. So, if music is so good for us,

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Certain kinds of music can be beneficial to people with Parkinson's, stimulating the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin that are absent in PD patients' brains.

physically and spiritually, if it really has power to lift or change moods, it stands to reason that it might also have great therapeutic value. Indeed, music therapy today is finding all sorts of applications in the treatment of many different conditions.

We've just touched on its effectiveness on heart-related ailments including blood pressure and, by extension, such conditions as hypertension and stress disorders, but music therapy has even been used to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In a pilot study conducted by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, combat veterans experiencing PTSD were taught to play guitar. An organisation called Guitars for Vets provided instruments and instruction and the Department reports the therapy proved "effective in reducing depression symptoms and improving health-related quality of life" — so much so that similar programs have since been rolled out at several VA hospitals.

Other exciting outcomes have been achieved in the areas of sleep disorders, brain dysfunction (including Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia), childhood development and learning disabilities.

What about me?

"Music acts like a magic key to which the most tightly closed heart opens."
~ Maria Augusta von Trapp

While music instruction, as we've seen, can be a vital adjunct to education, the complex, emerging field of music therapy has proved just as important for children with learning disabilities and other conditions. Even eating disorders such as anorexia and conditions like



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alexithymia (emotional verbal deficiency) may be treated through music therapy.

But perhaps its most dramatic breakthroughs have been achieved with children on the autism spectrum. For kids enclosed in a bubble that words can't pierce, neither inwards nor out, there is often only one way to communicate with them. As renowned guitarist and composer Robert Fripp put it, "Music is the wine that fills the cup of silence."

Singer Alex Smith, whose Sydney band Moving Pictures had a major hit in 1982 with *What About Me?*, moved to London in the mid-90s where he found himself working as a music facilitator at the John F Kennedy school for special-needs children. Glossing over the study and research that led to the job, Smith says it was "something I fell into; I started doing things that were natural to me". People compared what he was doing to Dave Hewitt's "intensive interaction" method or Margaret Corke's theories about communication through music, but for Smith and his associate Michael Rodwell it was all about "the experience".

They felt the kids, through their diagnosis, were labelled and that led others to put up barriers as to what the kids could do. Smith and Rodwell's approach was simply to cut through the labels: "We just decided to give them opportunities to play and listen, to touch the instruments, something which had been baulked at before — to join in."

Eventually, Smith set up as a consultant, both working with SEN (Special Educational Needs)

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children and providing training workshops for staff. Over time he lost count of the many mind-boggling, tear-welling, goosebump moments he experienced but, asked for an example, recalled one girl he worked with.

"She was like the Tasmanian devil in the Bugs Bunny cartoons," Smith remembers. "She would just bite and scratch and run away to stand in corners and rock backwards and forwards. I spent months alone in a largish room with her. I sat on a chair against one wall playing the same raga-like piece of music on my guitar; its rhythm matched her rocking. I used minimal eye contact — she didn't like that.

"Over the weeks she came closer. Eventually, she came and sat on a chair on the opposite side of the room from me. Weeks after that she sat next to me; weeks after that she looked into my eyes and smiled! She'd touch my knee with her foot to signal to me to start or stop.

"Then one day when I finished the piece she picked up my left hand and put it back on the [guitar] fretboard and sort of mouthed and signed, 'Please.'" Talk about a goosebump moment.

"This child's life was a living nightmare and she had a brother in the same school as affected as she was, if not worse. But, for an hour or so a week, she and I shared some peace and some empathy."

In a way, the universe may have been directing the singer to this work. After all, Moving Pictures guitarist Garry Frost wrote *What About Me?* while he himself was working with autistic children. Years later, after Smith had started teaching, his young son was diagnosed with Asperger's but now, "after many battles", he's studying history at university.

Now living in Liguria in northern Italy, Smith almost glows when he talks about those years in London: "I just loved it — the kids, the work, the music! Music in its most primal essence, right there in your face and all your senses ... One tap on a surface, one ding of a bell, one string of a guitar, one sung note could break down barriers."

Music & dementia

"Where words fail, music speaks."
~ Hans Christian Andersen

Fans of the sublime voice of Linda Ronstadt were saddened recently by the news that Parkinson's disease has robbed her of her instrument.

It's not the first time she's had trouble with her voice. As she told *Vanity Fair* in a 2013 interview, she took formal training for the first time in her career when, in her mid-30s, she found herself struggling while singing in *The Pirates of Penzance* on Broadway. Under the pressure of nightly performances, her voice had become so tight and constricted she felt close to panic.

"I had to get out of my own way," she recalled. Quoting a Mediaeval mystic and composer, she added, "Hildegard von Bingen said that singing is like being a feather on the breath of God — which resonates to my atheist soul."

Now Ronstadt's feather has fluttered to the ground for the last time. She can no longer sing a note, even in private, though she listens to music all the time. The irony is that researchers in music therapy and neuroscience have found that certain kinds of music can be beneficial to people with Parkinson's, stimulating the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin that are absent in PD patients' brains.

Not only that, musical rhythms can help them organise their movements, aiding in walking and balance, while singing (or at least vocalising) can assist verbal articulation. Those with too much movement — the involuntary tremors known as dyskinesia — can be calmed by slow, rhythmic music, which helps overactive patients relax and even sleep. Finally, active group therapy such as drumming, dance and

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movement can promote patients' emotional health by reducing depression, anxiety and social isolation.

Even stroke patients who have lost the ability to speak can be trained to say hundreds of phrases by singing them first. Harvard Medical School neuroscientist Gottfried Schlaug has demonstrated that patients with lesions on the left side of the brain, the area most associated with language, can recover the power of speech after a few minutes of singing phrases and tapping to the rhythm, suggesting that music therapy can physically reorder a damaged brain. As Schlaug explained it, "The underdeveloped systems on the right side of the brain that respond to music became enhanced and changed structures."

Music therapy has worked similar wonders with Alzheimer's patients, even in the disease's latter stages. According to studies by the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, "When used appropriately, music can shift mood, manage stress-induced agitation, stimulate positive interactions, facilitate cognitive function and co-ordinate motor movements."

The reason this works is related to what trained musicians and athletes refer to as muscle memory: the multiple practised movements they make without thinking. As music educator Alicia Ann Clair points out, "Rhythmic and other well-rehearsed responses require little to no cognitive or mental processing. They are influenced by the motor centre of the brain that responds directly to auditory rhythmic cues.

"A person's ability to engage in music, particularly rhythm playing and singing, remains intact late into the disease process because, again, these activities do not mandate cognitive functioning for success."

The tragedy for Linda Ronstadt and her admirers is that many of those fine motor skills are now gone; even brushing her teeth is a challenge. Perhaps it's the added frustration of having spent a lifetime performing at the highest level, but she doubts whether music therapy can help in her case.

"There's all kinds of stuff out there," she conceded in the *Vanity Fair* interview, "but it's nothing that can give you singing back. Singing is such a complex mechanism. You have to be able to do a whole lot of things at once that require repetitive movements of your vocal cords ... I couldn't do any of it [any more]."

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A matter of life & death

"The Knower of the mystery of sound
Knows the mystery of the whole universe."
~ Inayat Khan

Despite the undoubted benefits for the nervous system of a musical career, musicians are not exempt from the ravages of dementia or brain disease, as Ronstadt and legendary guitarist-singer Glen Campbell — aged 80 and now in the final stages of Alzheimer's — can attest.

Yet, as we've just seen, even in the twilight of life, just as at the beginning, music has a vital role to play. Musicians who've given concerts in nursing homes have reported the startling effect music can have on elderly patients. Just as a piece of music may help a Parkinson's sufferer recover the complicated rhythms of walking, even someone deep in dementia and unable to speak or otherwise interact will remember a cherished song word for word and sing the lyrics with gusto. At the very least they'll smile and tap along, just as they might have done as a baby.

It seems the enjoyment of music and our physiological responses to it persist right to the final moments of life. According to Vermont music therapist Islene Runningdeer, author of *Musical Encounters with Dying*, "Therapeutic music during the dying process is very effective at regulating breathing as the person goes through the transitional stages of breathing until there is no breath." She also points to the consoling effects on the loved ones sitting vigil.

In the same way, music thanatologist (from the Greek *thanatos*, or death) Jennifer Hollis calls her work "medicine that you can give both to the patient and to their family". She plays the harp and sings for the dying at Lahey Hospital



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You are your music

A 2003 study conducted at Heriot-Watt University in Malaysia by Jason Rentfrow, Sam Gosling and Professor Adrian North concluded that a person's taste in music tends to reflect their personality. While that may sound like a no-brainer, the study, based on a questionnaire sent to 36,000 respondents in 60 countries, found a strong correlation between music genres and the personality traits of the subjects.

Here's a summary of their findings, by genre and temperament:

- **Blues:** high self-esteem, creative, outgoing, gentle and at ease
- **Jazz:** high self-esteem, creative, outgoing and at ease
- **Classical:** high self-esteem, creative, introvert and at ease
- **Rap:** high self-esteem, outgoing
- **Opera:** high self-esteem, creative and gentle
- **Country & western:** hardworking & outgoing
- **Reggae:** high self-esteem, creative, not hardworking, outgoing, gentle and at ease
- **Dance:** creative and outgoing but not gentle
- **Indie:** low self-esteem, creative, not hard working and not gentle
- **Bollywood:** creative and outgoing
- **Rock/heavy metal:** low self-esteem, creative, not hard-working, not outgoing, gentle and at ease
- **Pop:** high self-esteem, hardworking, outgoing and gentle but not creative and not at ease
- **Soul:** high self-esteem, creative, outgoing, gentle and at ease

In an article titled *You Are What's on Your Playlist* for *SFGate* in 2005, Benny Evangelista expanded on this research by looking at celebrities' iTunes playlists to see what they said about them.

President George Bush, for example, preferred country artists like George Jones and Alan Jackson, rock songs by Van Morrison and the work of folk-pop singer Joni Mitchell. Jason Rentfrow analysed this list as "conventional styles of music" belonging to "someone who is extroverted and a bit relaxed but not necessarily open to new experiences". For Barack Obama, see under Soul above.

As for President Trump, he doesn't own an iPod but one might make assumptions based on his choice of campaign themes: anthemic songs by Neil Young, the Rolling Stones, Queen and the like (all of whom demanded he cease using their music). See above under Rock/heavy metal. There's no evidence he listens to music for relaxation, preferring instead to kick back in front of the telly. He did once reveal his favourite musical is *Evita* — make of that what you will.

near Boston, Massachusetts. Beth Collins, director of the hospital's palliative care program, concedes there's little research to back up the benefits of music thanatology — aside from the evidence of her own eyes. As she told NPR's *Weekend Edition* in 2016, "I don't think things have to be proven. I think they just have to work. And to me, this is a heck of a lot better than giving somebody medication that's going to change things going on in their body."

Perhaps Australia's only music thanatologist is Peter Roberts, also a harpist and singer. He trained in Montana and now works at the St John of God Hospital in Geelong, Victoria, as part of the hospital's pastoral care. He sees his role as using music to create a "sacred space" to help patients find peace and clarity as they confront terminal illness.

"The whole point of it is to lead people into a comfortable container of silence," he told Radio National in a 2015 edition of *Life Matters*. "It's wonderful to have something of value to offer when the doctors can do no more. The healing powers of music have been a source of wonder for centuries. Music is a non-invasive method of influencing heart rate, breathing quality and physical pain.

"An essential component to this offering involves bringing an attitude of compassion and an attentive presence that is expressed through music. This may sound a bit mushy to some but is nonetheless very real."

Peter Roberts also plays for premature babies

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Of working with special needs kids, one-time music consultant Adam Smith recalls: "We just decided to give them opportunities to play and listen, to touch the instruments, to join in."

— which is where we all came in. Whether you're an unborn infant or someone who's about to push the boat out for the last time, bound for waters unknown, music is oceanic. It's the rhythm of life we all swim in, as natural as a mother's heartbeat, as good for the body as it is for the spirit. When in doubt, take music. It certainly can't hurt.

"Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all that is good, just and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate and eternal form."

So said Plato. Or did he? There are many pages of learned discussion on the internet as to whether he did or didn't, yet the quote has an undeniable ring of truth. Indeed, it has its own music.

Let the music play

1. Sing like nobody's listening. Open your trap and let it out; it's really good for you. Look back at Brian Eno's comments about the benefits of singing near the top of this article.
2. Join a choir. The payoffs are many and include personal as well as social rewards. The very act of learning to sing counterpoint — a bass part, for example — will teach you a lot about music.
3. Learn to play an instrument. You don't have to be a virtuoso to enjoy the benefits of playing. Your community ukulele group is a good place to start; it's a simple instrument with a quick learning curve (though there are many who play ukulele at virtuoso standard, as a visit to YouTube will confirm).
4. Take a music appreciation course. Even if you don't play, knowing something of music history and even learning to follow a score will increase your enjoyment exponentially. If you like classical music, try to follow the way the composer uses his or her themes, alone and in counterpoint. If you like jazz, learn to follow the "form" behind each soloist; you might have to count eight-bar sections at first but you'll soon grasp it instinctively. If you prefer pop or rock, try to hear each instrument in isolation.
5. Take dancing lessons. Nothing (aside from actually playing) unlocks the dynamics of music like dancing, whether Latin, jitterbug or rockabilly.
6. Go to live performances. Not only is it the best way to experience any genre of music but it will help ensure the survival of live music and support the next generation of musicians. Paying for music you consume also helps; avoid online streaming services as most pay the creators little or nothing.
7. Give the young the gift of music. By now you realise the boundless flow-on advantages of childhood music instruction in developing self-confidence, teamwork, brain function and fine motor skills. Again, the goal isn't virtuosity — but who knows?

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