

## Book Review

***Therapeutic Songwriting: Developments in Theory, Methods, and Practice* by Felicity A. Baker**Robert E. Krout<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA***Hardcover:** 344 pages | **Publisher:** Palgrave Macmillan, (July 8, 2015) | **Language:** English | **ISBN-10:** 1137499249 | **ISBN-13:** 9781137499219.

**Summary:** Over the past ten years songwriting has emerged as a popular method for many clinicians working in a therapy context. This book provides the first comprehensive examination of the contemporary methods and models of songwriting involved and also discusses the environmental, sociocultural, individual and group factors which might support or constrain this therapeutic process. Methods that focus predominantly on lyric creation, music creation, or on both are described and illustrated by case vignettes and samples of song materials, and supported by pictorial representations of the methods. The role of music and music technology is highlighted as an important component of the therapy process. Finally this book also pays attention to comparing and contrasting models of songwriting according to the orientation of the therapist. Models outlined include those informed by behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, feminist, community music therapy, and resource-oriented music therapy approaches.

Songwriting as a clinical music therapy intervention has become more widespread in recent years. Various songwriting models and methods have emerged, as well as increasingly varied client populations, clinical goals, and settings in which songwriting may be beneficial. With more and more information about songwriting being reported in the music therapy literature from diverse sources, this comprehensive review of recent developments in songwriting theory, methods, and practice provides a unique and much needed resource for the discipline. It has been authored by Professor Felicity Baker, one of the most central figures in music therapy songwriting theory, research, and practice, and should prove to be an indispensable resource for any music therapist interested in songwriting. In addition to providing the first comprehensive examination of the contemporary songwriting methods and models, the author also addresses a number of key related topics.

The book is logically presented and organized into 4 main sections and a total of 15 chapters. In the first section, chapter one provides an introduction and outlines the author's 4-year, 8-step research focus and process culminating in the book. Professor Baker's passion for and dedication to the subject, evident throughout the book, should both inspire and inform readers. As part of her study of the development of music

therapy songwriting, Baker interviewed music therapists from around the world and explored with them key aspects of their work. These included how they use song writing in their practice, what occurs in the process of songwriting with, by, and for clients, what makes songwriting effective as an intervention, and the many possibilities for its uses. Chapter two, titled "Songwriting - A Coming of Age" explores a number of relevant and revealing areas, including the many strengths of songwriting as well and limitations and contraindications of songwriting use.

The second section of the book consists of 5 chapters that explore the many factors influencing the songwriting process. Each of the 5 main factors is considered as a whole, and then examined in depth via a number of sub-factors. The main factors include sociocultural, environmental, individual, and group factors that are important for the therapist to consider when using songwriting. The roles of music and music technology are also highlighted as important components of the therapy process, and Baker illustrates the uniqueness of songwriting as a therapeutic tool. As an example of how factors are explored in depth, the important area of sociocultural factors are examined in a number of ways, including East versus West, spiritual and religious beliefs, socioeconomic status and gender, music's diverse roles in different sociocultural groups, heterogeneity versus homogeneity, language barriers, diversity and the therapeutic relationship. A conclusion section to the chapter provides a very helpful figure that represents these factors visually for examination and comparison.

The third section of the book is simply titled "Songwriting Methods." Here, Baker provides a comprehensive review of the many various songwriting methods that have been developed internationally. She then presents and details these in the next 3 chapters. The first focuses on songwriting methods that emphasize lyric creation. These include fill in the blank, song parody, strategic songwriting, and rapping over pre-composed music and remixing. The next chapter

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explores songwriting methods that emphasize both lyric and music creation. These are rapping or singing over original music, song collage, and improvised song creations. The final chapter in this section looks at songwriting methods that emphasize music creation. A number of techniques are again clearly described, including mash-ups, pastiche, and hodge podge. It should be noted that for all of the above methods, limitations and contraindications are considered. These are especially relevant and appreciated given the personal and potentially powerful nature of songwriting as a dynamic experience in a client's life. Throughout this section, Baker again makes good use of tables and figures in presenting overviews of the methods discussed and how they are implemented. These serve in part as flow diagrams that outline the songwriting process as it unfolds within the various approaches.

In the fourth section of the book, Baker explores the crucial aspect of the therapist's orientation and how various methods and approaches reflect these various orientations. These include in-depth chapters considering both outcome-oriented and experience-oriented models of songwriting. The author compares and contrasts models of songwriting according to the orientation of the therapist and explores models informed by behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic orientations, as well as those coming from a number of others including humanistic, positive psychology, creative music therapy, and others. The next chapter of this section examines context-oriented models, including music therapy in context, as context, and as interacting contexts. Models here include feminist music therapy, community music therapy, and resource-oriented music therapy. The various models and approaches are again clearly described and illustrated by a number of case vignettes and samples of song materials. The descriptions are also supported by visual representations of the methods via tables and figures. These help the reader in visually comparing the commonalities and distinctions between the approaches. The final chapter addresses and considers songwriting as an integral clinical music therapy practice. In the final book figure, Baker assists the reader in comparing and contrasting the main classifications of outcome-oriented, experience-oriented, and context-oriented approaches as they interact with several influencing factors. These factors are summarized as orientation, models, and methods of songwriting, as well as what happens after the songwriting process is concluded. The final chapter brings the book to a close by circling back and considering songwriting as an integral practice.

In summary, the author has combined over 20 years experience as a clinician, researcher, and educator and woven this experience into a text which serves as a substantive follow-up to the first major book to focus on songwriting as a distinct music therapy method<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Baker weaves together a

wealth of information that encompasses a rich and remarkable breadth of approaches to, and information about, songwriting for and in music therapy. The book is logically organized, clearly written, and clinically relevant with its many case examples and vignettes. This multifaceted resource is a unique and exciting addition to the literature, and one that will help music therapists explore, implement, and evaluate the success and positive change that songwriting can help clients to realize.

### Biographical Statement

Dr. Krout is Professor and Chair of the Music Therapy Department in the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, F, & Wigram, T. (Eds.) (2005). *Song writing methods, techniques and clinical applications for music therapy clinicians, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley.