

**Trallero, C. (2020). *El cálido abrazo de la música*. Kit-book Servicios Editoriales.**

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**El cálido abrazo de la música (*The warm embrace of music*)**

Witnessing something worth remembering marks a fortunate occasion, to say the least. And, on this occasion, we can consider ourselves fortunate that someone with the experience and knowledge of Dr Conxa Trallero has invited us to bear witness to a part of her life: a gift in the form of a book that will undoubtedly make a lasting impression.

First of all, its free and open access places this work at the hands of present-day and future society, a society that is hyperconnected, fast and eager to share its findings, as well as the questions that have inspired them. In 2020, the obligatory Covid-19 lockdown gave this author the chance to finish this extensive and profound book, the third in an exciting saga dedicated to personal well-being and growth gained through musical experience. It has been both the springboard and culmination of years working at universities teaching therapeutic care to young people and adults. Essentially, Dr Trallero, Conxa to her colleagues, has taught for more than 20 years at the University of Barcelona, in the same city

where she studied to get her degree in Music at the Barcelona Music Conservatory. This author's classical musical training was supplemented and shaped by her profound curiosity for music from abroad (so-called world music), as well as for modern music by musicians of the former Plateria Orchestra, linked to what was the Zeleste hall and school of music, also in Barcelona.

Given her educational background, it is not surprising that our author's interest in music therapy grew, a science about which our country is still learning, as if it were "underage" —if we may say so— but one which is gradually claiming its undisputed worth. Her training in music therapy at the URL with Patxi del Camp and R. Benenzon, among others, opened her eyes and ears to another way of listening to and understanding music, with respect but without the fear with which it used to be taught in conservatories. This is made evident through the activities proposed in this book and in her way of approaching musical creation from the perspective of proximity, simple intention and respect for creation, free from complexes or prejudices.

This attitude, present in each of the 460 pages, is manifested alongside the rigour and precision of Dr Trallero's proposals. Although she is no stranger to improvisation, her working methodology is extremely precise and mindful of the smallest details, including the use of a multitude of sound resources, the use of the classroom itself or the organisation of class time. The activities (more than five hundred are described in detail) proposed in each chapter are the fruit of 30 years of experience at the crossroads between music education and music therapy. Conxa not only explores music therapy for complex illnesses, but presents activities for self-exploration, personal fulfilment and growth that can be used by anyone, of any age, background or creed. This philosophy has always been the author's inspiration, evident in the proposals she makes on her website *Musicoteràpia autorrealitzadora* (Self-realising music therapy, available at [www.musicoterapia-autorrealitzadora.net](http://www.musicoterapia-autorrealitzadora.net)), where we can stay up to date on her research. She is inspired by music's beneficial influence, its sense of transformation, a shared transformation in this case, given most of the proposals are designed to be carried out in groups.

In chapter one, Conxa describes her personal journey, which helps the reader understand how Spanish music therapy has evolved over recent decades. It is a sincere, accessible and practical review that outlines the difficulties, contributions, lights and shadows of a unique field of knowledge that is difficult to grasp, marked and yet also limited by the personalities of its instigators and advocates. It is an introduction to music therapy from a scientific, personal and human perspective. In this sense, her determination and ability to discuss many different topics has allowed her —among other achievements— to publish her work with prestigious publishers (such as Desclée De Brouwer, Abadía de Montserrat Publications or the University of Barcelona's Edicions); to win the Joan Profitós Prize for pedagogical essays for her book *El despertar del ser armónico. Musicoteràpia Autorealitzadora*, ('The awakening of the harmonic being. Self-realising Music Therapy') and to teach Introduction to Music Therapy at the University of Barcelona, a subject on the now discontinued Diploma in Special Education Teaching, which unfortunately disappeared with the re-design of higher education in Europe.

The second part of the book describes the group workshops given over the years in different academic scenarios (such as postgraduate degrees, masters degrees and summer courses). The author, a mindfulness connoisseur, presents content that touches on various musical, corporal and emotional themes, ranging from body awareness to musical creativity, as well as emotional balance, the awakening of one's own voice or the discovery of inner music. The third part of the book includes activities aimed at specific audiences (such as oncology patients) for the purposes of stress prevention, self-realisation and improved communication, who can find a way to improve and alleviate their discomfort through musical experiences. This wealth of material is also accompanied by practical examples of individual workshops, as well as an appendix featuring poems, scores, songs, visualisations, questionnaires for specific workshops and listening exercises for all ages. This final section sets this book apart from other texts on the same subject, as it contains a wonderful selection of resources that help us understand music from perspectives and manifestations that would otherwise be difficult to

access. Especially today, at a time when technology opens the door to an infinite amount of material, an expert view such as Dr Trallero's provides us with an invaluable insight into where to look.

For music teachers, this book is full of original and novel resources, difficult to find in a single volume and drawn from a wide range of musical practices with a clear orientation towards well-being and fulfilment. Conxa describes the influence of music poetically, as "solace", or as a "warm embrace", which allows us to feel part of something greater than ourselves, something that seeks to transcend our limited individual experience by sharing it with others.

The book is peppered with technical language, fruit of the author's extensive teaching experience. But it is also accessible and understandable for musicians and teachers, music therapists and psychologists, with a rigorous yet sincere style; it expresses excitement, poses questions and highlights the strengths of this difficult task of putting thoughts about music and emotions into words. Conxa flawlessly combines action and reflection, one of the book's greatest qualities. The gradual construction of knowledge from inductive and deductive work bridges the gap between theory and practice to offer a valuable tool for many who work directly with people.

Texts of this magnitude are the result of extensive multidisciplinary training, such as that required in the field of music therapy, which encompasses remote yet intricately connected disciplines. As a result, it shines a light on the similarities and contradictions of the different fields with which music therapy is intertwined. In this regard, this book, a slow burner, written calmly and with unequivocal certainty, leads us to a place of discovery and deepens our knowledge of music as a positive experience. Moreover, the activities Dr Trallero proposes implicitly require interdisciplinary knowledge, which also represent, for those who stand by and practice them, a process of personal growth that must not be taken for granted, and one which they hold very dear. That is the real gift.

## Bibliography

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