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## 'Biblo-Musical' Approach To Music Therapy, Saul and David: A Case Study

**Samuel Olusegun Onimisi AUDA**

Lecturer, Department of Performance Studies, Faculty of Church Music,  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

'Biblo-musical' approach to music therapy is the biblical, spiritual approach to music therapy. It is well-known that music therapy is not a new field or genre. There are various ways by which music can be used in the lives of human beings. This paper seeks to focus on the spiritual, biblical dimension of music therapy, using Saul and David (1Sam. 16:13-23) as a case study.

The paper will give some definitions of terms in the introduction. It will also look into the current trend of music therapy, especially in the church, with some practical examples. Third, the paper will look into the case of Saul and David and deduce some issues as implications for the church today. There are some spiritual principles in Saul and David's biblical case that the contemporary church can apply to make music therapy in church music more impactful and more effective.

**Keywords:** Music, therapy, alternative therapy, 'Biblo-Musical, music therapy, Saul and David

### **1. Introduction**

Music therapy is not a new phenomenon, globally speaking, but it is more pronounced in the developed world than it is in Africa, especially Nigeria. A document by Roy Grant (1995), an Associate Professor and Director of Music Therapy, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, shows that as of 1995, there have been some 70-80 colleges and universities that are offering degrees in music therapy in the United States. Grant adds that music therapy has been a growing field of study and service in the States, especially attracting young people who are musically talented and committed to serving others. This field (music therapy) has attained wide recognition as an allied health profession, both in the private sector and in government agencies. "Currently, music therapists work in programs for persons of all ages and from all walks of life." (Grant 1995, 12-13)

While holistic varying cultures have long practiced the art of music therapy, it is this century that "mechanistic cultures and scientific research" have documented music's relationship to the cure and alleviation of suffering and various illnesses and have applied that to medical science.

The following are the definitions of the working terms:

- Music: Sounds that are arranged in a way that is pleasant or exciting to listen to. People sing music or play it on instruments. (Hornby, 1979, 973)
- Therapy: The treatment of a physical problem or an illness.
- Alternative Therapy: Treatments that do not use traditional drugs. (Hornby, p. 1548)
- "Biblo-musical" is a term used by the writer to depict a music therapy based on biblical principle.
- Saul and David are two major Old Testament figures in the history of Israel. Saul was the first king of Israel, followed by David, the son of Jesse (Holy Bible. KJV)
- Music Therapy: The clinical use of music in the treatment, especially, though not exclusively, of mental illness or disability. (Holy Bible)

### **2. Practice of Music Therapy**

Music therapy is the prescribed use of music under the leadership of trained, qualified personnel for the purpose of achieving specific therapeutic objectives.

#### *2.1. According to Grant*

Music therapy is used to elicit desired responses in the habilitative process of educating and training handicapped children; it is used to elicit different responses in the rehabilitative process associated with emotional difficulties, substance abuse, and brain trauma from strokes or accidents. Also, music therapy is effective in achieving desired therapeutic outcomes in clients with problems associated with aging, including Alzheimer's disease, and in facilitating communication with families of Alzheimer's patients. (Grant, 13)

## 2.2. Music Therapy: More than Just Music

Music therapy is not just music and not just therapy. It is the two systematically and strategically infused:

Training in music therapy requires clinical practicum experiences with various facilities such as nursing homes, daycare centers for the elderly, mental hospitals, and so forth during a college or four-year university academic training, plus a six-month internship at the completion of the academic study. Grant (1995) also added that the facility must be approved by the National Association for Music Therapy, and the student must work under the supervision of a certified supervisor. "Internships and employment opportunities exist in virtually all types of treatment facilities throughout the United States and in school systems serving handicapped children. Also, in the United States, a complete listing of colleges and degree requirements can be obtained from the National Association for Music Therapy, 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 930, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3342. (Grant, 13)<sup>7</sup>

## 2.3. Glimpses of Music Therapy at Work

Grant (1995) gave a record of some practical manifestations or testimonies of music therapy when he visited some state facilities in the United States. He also highlighted some other music therapy cases listed below:

- *Grant's Visit to a State Facility:* There were 40 to 50 mentally handicapped children, which are very severe with no structured activities. At this state facility, a music therapist began twice-weekly music therapy sessions at 10:00 a.m. on specified days. The therapist usually sings several songs accompanied by the Autoharp. One of the attendants shared with Grant the testimony of positive change in the life and attitude of the patients, things she had not seen in them since the seven years that she had nursed the patients. The attendant could not hold it but stood in awe with tears in her eyes. (Grant, 13)
- *Susan Rett Syndrome's Case:* Rett syndrome is a degenerative and terminal illness that occurs in young females. It can easily lead to death due to lung congestion, especially during the latter stages when victims are usually confined to a wheelchair. Susan was 17 years old at this time. Her attendant had given up on her, but then miraculously, Susan started to respond positively to a rigorous program of music and movement exercises, vocalization (vocal exercises), and deep breathing routines to increase her oxygen intake. Seven months later, an x-ray revealed there was no congestion in her system again. Source
- "In a unit for brain trauma patients suffering from strokes or accidents, John, even while in a coma, responded to his favorite hymn by twitching certain facial muscles in rhythm with the therapist's singing." (Source) In this special case, the speech therapist has to work together with the patient in the rehabilitation of communication skills, and this has become a very important part of the healing process.
- Grant (1995) also shared the report given to him by Oliver. Sachs, author of *Awakenings* (from which the movie with the same title was made), reported in a workshop concerning the research he carried out that many of the patients suffering from Parkinson's disease (a disease that causes restlessness in the body or body shaking) ceased their shaking during music activity. According to Sachs, they also ceased their hallucinations.
- Grant (1995) gave us a documented reality-based communication among those with Alzheimer's disease during music activities.
- Family members have experienced warmth, affection, and other meaningful, nonverbal communication with their loved ones with Alzheimer's disease through music, some after extended times with no communication at all. (Grant, 13)
- Grant (1995) also gave a report of a case following the California, USA earthquake that occurred in 1994. After this tragedy, music therapy students from California State University at Northridge, with their Professor, provided music therapy sessions to help homeless children deal with the stress of the devastating incident. (Grant, 24-25)

## 3. Samples of Music Therapy Videos (Sound Medicine)

1. Solfeggio healing Meditation Music - Celestial Soundscapes of Transformation and Peace - 8.25 minutes - by Anima
2. Sound Healing - Music Meditation (Delta Waves) - 46.27 minutes - by the Dazbar 2
3. Journey into Frequency - Pineal Activation Meditation - 9.13 minutes - by Pineal Meditation
4. DNA Repair and Healing Music/The Original Solfeggio (Greek subtitles) - 8.34 minutes - by Pineal Meditation
5. Healing-Solfeggio tones, binaural beats, brain sync - 9.28 minutes - by Ms Redqueen
6. Harmonic Matrix of all - 6 Solfeggio Healing Tones - 7.59 minutes - by the Dazbar 2
7. "Mama's Broken Heart" teaser - 39 seconds - by Mirandalambert

Music therapy is one of the ways by which the gap between basic science, medicine, the arts, and humanities is bridged.

## 4. Brief History of Music Therapy

According to Adedeji, in his paper titled "Theology and Practice of Music Therapy among Nigerian Indigenous Churches: Christ Apostolic Church as a case study," the origin of music therapy could be traced to the "antiquity period as revealed in the Jewish and Greek religions culture of old (Spender, 1980). There have been various attestations of literature to the practice of music therapy among the ancient Greeks, apart from the popular story of Saul and David (that is our case study in this paper) (Broklesby, 174). Since then, music has been used increasingly in the treatment of mental, physical and emotional ailments, as Spender (1980) rightly identified (Spendr, 864).

This century has witnessed a huge development in the practice and study of music therapy, especially in the USA statistics. (Grant, 13)

In Nigeria, there are a variety of music therapy practices, but they are not as practiced in developed countries, especially in the United States. Unconsciously, music therapy has been practiced in schools, homes and churches, but much more conscious efforts should be given to this field of study as in the United States. As stated by Adedeji, "Personal interviews with some relevant medical professionals have revealed that music has been found helpful and effective in treating many diseases, maintaining physical fitness of pregnant mothers and giving relaxations and relief to patients. (Adedeji, 1998, 34-35)

Many other fields of therapy, such as physiotherapy and psychotherapy, are also making use of music in their therapeutic study and practice. (Spendr, 864)

Adedeji (1998) rightly identified that, although there is no doubt about the usefulness of music therapy in Nigerian medical practice, the special area of study has yet to be given more conscious attention by both music specialists and medical practitioners. Furthermore, the conclusion could easily be drawn that music therapy has not been given rightful recognition and utilization in Nigeria. He Adedeji declared that "For instance, I am unaware of any Department or Unit of Music Therapy, either in a University or hospital in Nigeria till date." (Adedeji's statistics should be taken seriously because he is currently the President of the Society of the Nigerian Musicologists, with branches in almost all the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics across the country) (Adedeji, 35).

But generally and globally speaking, the use of music and musical sounds in healing rites is receiving more serious attention than ever before in the last two decades. (Alnede and Ekewunu, 2009; 159-163)

## 5. The Biblical Dimension of Music Therapy

### *The Case Study of Saul and David – and the Implications for Today's Nigerian Music Therapy (1 Sam. 16:13-23)*

The church of today has a lot to learn from the biblical story of Saul and David as far as the issue of music therapy is concerned. Since the Bible is the guidebook for all the teachings and practices of the church, this writer thinks it wise to go back to the Bible for guidance on how to go about the issue of music therapy. The Holy Bible provides instances of how music was used in ancient times for healing purposes. Beyond healing, the Bible also talks of a musical genre that was used to destroy the walls of Jericho.

Different kinds of healing that have been talked about rely on the Bible. According to Adamo (2004) and Fatokun (2004), God is primarily concerned with the wholeness of man (III John 2 –), "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" 19

From the careful observation of the passage under consideration – (ISam.16:13-23), the following very important issues are raised and discussed:

- The spiritual dimension of physical ailment, oppression and sickness in Saul – vs. 23(a)
- The skillfulness of David as a musician – vs. 16(a), 18(b)
- David was anointed of God – vs. 13
- Seeing the need for deliverance – vs. 14-15
- David, the music therapist per excellence – vs. 23
- The sickness in Saul has its roots in the spiritual. As clearly seen in the passage under consideration, it was the evil spirit of God that was troubling him. No matter what kind of therapeutic measure is taken, the spiritual needs to be taken care of first before we can effectively deal with the spiritual. I trace the life of Saul through discovering that he was never totally delivered from his problem because the spiritual was never dealt with. His healing was temporary because they had to look for David all the time to minister to him, but it was very unfortunate for him; he saw his helper as his prime enemy.
- David was skillful, which means he mastered his art as a musician. Today's musicians must work hard to develop their skills. God will use what they have if they master the art of music therapy very well.
- It is not enough to be a skillful musician only to be an effective music therapist; one must be anointed by God and filled with God's Holy Spirit. He is the only one who can empower us for this task.
- An effective musical therapist must see the need for healing in a patient to effectively minister healing. The sick also should look for the healer.
- The result achieved in vs. 23 of the passage reveals that the music therapist, David, is effective in his ministry. There is a vivid result: he is really a music therapist of excellence.

Definitely, there is healing power in music, which music therapists should identify and make happen (Mc Elrath, 1995:8-10). God can also use church musicians as music therapists, unknowing to them, during praise-worship and other musical activities in the church.

Today, music therapists function in hospitals, schools, homes of patients, etc. However, little is yet known of this therapeutic work in Nigeria. Although there are music healing traditions all over Nigerian ethnic groups, there is a lacuna in the theories that facilitate music therapy among Nigerian people. Issues like the setting where music therapy should be carried out, the choice of music (instrumental, vocal, or both) to be used, the choice of musical instruments and the dynamics (loud or soft music and how loud and how soft) and other related measures need to be handled carefully and creatively. (Aleede and Ekewunu, 162)

As this paper has mentioned, music therapy is now an officially accepted tool for the alleviation of varying ailments in hospitals, nursing homes, special education programmes, and psychiatric facilities in the United States. The following have been discovered as some ways by which music and music therapy can alleviate suffering both psychologically and biologically:

- i. Reduces stress
- ii. Supports physical exercise

- iii. Assists with child labour and delivery
- iv. Alleviates pain in “conjunction with anesthesia or pain medication”
- v. Elevates mood and counteracts depression
- vi. Promotes movement for physical rehabilitation
- vii. Calms, sedates, or induces sleep
- viii. Counteracts apprehension or fear
- ix. Lessens muscle tension
- x. Increases physical, mental, and social/emotional functioning
- xi. Improves communication skills and physical coordination. (Corbitt, 158-159)

## 6. Conclusion

It has been rightly argued in this paper that it is very clear that music has an important role as a healer when it brings about a holistic wellness that includes the body, mind, and soul. Community inclusiveness/inclusion is also important because a community is made up of individuals. A body of healing individuals makes a healthy community. (Corbitt, 1998:145)

This writer will like to end this paper with the refrain of a Negro Spiritual (author-unanimous) “There is a Balm in Gilead” (Jer. 8:22).

- “There is a Balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
- There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.”(Forbis, 1991, 269)

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