

MUSIC

ARTS FOR HEALTH

Series Editor: Paul Crawford, Professor of Health Humanities,
University of Nottingham, UK

The *Arts for Health* series offers a ground-breaking set of books that guide the general public, carers and healthcare providers on how different arts can help people to stay healthy or improve their health and wellbeing.

Bringing together new information and resources underpinning the health humanities (that link health and social care disciplines with the arts and humanities), the books demonstrate the ways in which the arts offer people worldwide a kind of shadow health service – a non-clinical way to maintain or improve our health and wellbeing. The books are aimed at general readers along with interested arts practitioners seeking to explore the health benefits of their work, health and social care providers and clinicians wishing to learn about the application of the arts for health, educators in arts, health and social care and organizations, carers and individuals engaged in public health or generating healthier environments. These easy-to-read, engaging short books help readers to understand the evidence about the value of arts for health and offer guidelines, case studies and resources to make use of these non-clinical routes to a better life.

Other titles in the series:

<i>Film</i>	Steven Schlozman
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Music and the arts reach around all corners of the world and into all corners of our life and Dr Eugene Beresin details many aspects of their purpose and importance in his book *Arts For Health: Music*. I think this is important information to share and it reinforces what all of us musicians and artists already know...that the arts (regardless of their type), when done with the right intention, are healing arts.

– *Jeff Coffin, 3x Grammy winning saxophonist, composer, educator, author. Dave Matthews Band, Bela Fleck & the Flecktones, Ear Up Records founder, The Mu'tet.*

Music is certainly a pleasurable and universal part of the human experience, but is it really possible that harms could be assuaged through harmonies, symptoms soothed by symphonies, remedies found in rhythm? As an expert Harvard physician, healer, and musician, Dr Gene Beresin makes a forceful and persuasive case that the answer is a resounding, “yes” – scientifically elucidating and affirming music’s psycho-biological therapeutic effects and uncovering its power to heal. Informative, instructive, inspirational, students, clinicians, patients, and family members, will find solace and joy here.

– *John F. Kelly, PhD, ABPP Elizabeth R. Spallin Professor of Psychiatry in Addiction Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Director of the Recovery Research Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA. Award-winning songwriter, singer, musician, and producer.*

If you are in the group of people that think music is ancillary to your life – or extracurricular or non-essential – but have been waiting for someone to prove you wrong, look no further! Dr Eugene Beresin has comprehensively, and in simple language, dispelled any hypothesis of the kind in his book, *Arts For Health: Music*. From heartfelt personal testimonies to factual medical data, this book beautifully explains the effect music universally has on humanity and why it’s important for individual well-being. It is a must have for all music teachers, students and professionals, as it gives language to what we innately already know.

– *Terri Lyne Carrington – Grammy Award winning, drummer/composer/producer/activist, who is played with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Stan Getz, Al Jarreau and many others.*

Music has a visceral, transcendent power that cuts across language, culture and age, and it can help us connect to each other, as well as to our innermost selves. In *Arts For Health: Music*, Gene Beresin has created a fantastic reminder of and argument for music's power to lead us to healthier, more connected, and more fulfilling lives.

– *Chris Eldridge* – Grammy winning acoustic guitarist with *Punch Brothers*, *Julian Lage*. *Americana Music Association Instrumentalist of the Year*. Visiting Assistant Professor of *Contemporary Acoustic Music*, *Oberlin Conservatory*.

MUSIC

EUGENE BERESIN

*The Massachusetts General Hospital and
Harvard Medical School, USA*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to my mother, Marcella Grace Beresin,
who inspired my love of music and playing by ear. I was no match
for her performance of Chopin's Fantaisie Impromptu.*

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SERIES PREFACE: CREATIVE PUBLIC HEALTH

The “Arts for Health” series aims to provide key information on how different arts and humanities practices can support, or even transform, health and wellbeing. Each book introduces a particular creative activity or resource and outlines its place and value in society, the evidence for its use in advancing health and wellbeing, and cases of how this works. In addition, each book provides useful links and suggestions to readers for following-up on these quick reads. We can think of this series as a kind of shadow health service – encouraging the use of the arts and humanities alongside all the other resources on offer to keep us fit and well.

Creative practices in the arts and humanities offer a fantastic, non-medical, but medically relevant way to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Intuitively, we know just how important creative activities are in maintaining or recovering our best possible lives. For example, imagine that we woke up tomorrow to find that all music, books or films had to be destroyed, learn that singing, dancing or theatre had been outlawed or that galleries, museums and theatres had to close permanently; or, indeed, that every street had posters warning citizens of severe punishment for taking photographs, drawing or writing. How would we feel? What would happen to our bodies and minds? How would we survive? Unfortunately, we have seen this kind of removal of creative activities from human society before and today many people remain terribly restricted in artistic expression and consumption.

I hope that this series adds a practical resource to the public. I hope people buy these little books as gifts for family and friends,

or for hard-pressed healthcare professionals, to encourage them to revisit or to consider a creative path to living well. I hope that creative public health makes for a brighter future.

Professor Paul Crawford

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I am deeply grateful to so many people who gracefully put up with my obsessive and repetitive questions and commentary about the content of this book – mostly my wife Michaela and my children, Jade, Caitlin, Glennon and Zack, along with their partners. I could not have produced this manuscript without the support and encouragement from the staff of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at MGH both for the production of this book and for my intense focus on writing sound-tracks. I am indebted to my dear friends in our Band, Pink Freud and the Transitional Objects – David, Tony, Brad, Boz, Bill, Chris, and Kari, who continually inspire my playing and writing music. You are the backbone of a communal process that keeps my musical sensibilities alive and growing. Thank you. I am indebted to Paul Crawford for allowing me the time to write, extension after extension, as I had to deal with the pandemic through my work at the Clay Center and with my MGH medical students, residents, and patients. And I would be lost without my teachers Ben Cook and Earl Pughe, who gently and relentlessly push me to the limit on piano and guitar. Thank you all.

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WHY MUSIC? THE UNIVERSALITY OF MUSIC

“I don’t sing because I’m happy. I’m happy because I sing.”

William James

We are all immersed in music. From the time we get up in the morning, uncomfortably listening to the radio alarm we have set to music, to a venture to the mall, enduring the background music to a pop up on our computers, or watching TV – commercials, soundtracks for movies and series, to firing up our personal playlists. Music is ubiquitous. This is not to say we always pay attention to it, but it is inescapable.

Dick Clark, the creator and host of American Bandstand famously said, “music is the soundtrack of your life.” And in many ways, it is.

But beyond our immersion, by choice or by chance, music is universal as we will argue below, and serves a multiplicity of functions in our lives.

THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN HUMAN SOCIETY

Let’s look at the many places and functions of music in our lives.

1. Reinforcing Social and Community Cohesion and Rituals:

Music plays a core role in religious and spiritual services, and

this is true for all cultures. It is instrumental in coordination with scriptures, whether sung by a religious leader, to a chorus, to the community singing together. It serves to honor births, deaths, and holidays.

Music is fundamental in transmitting cultural rituals universally, such as drum circles, tribal dances, weddings (and, of course, in some cultures, the rituals of the first dance of a marital couple, to the dance with mother or father). The history of a culture is often depicted in song with or without lyrics. Music is fundamental in connecting people in a community. Concerts are a superb example of our feeling a compelling sense of connection, not just to the band but to each other.

And furthermore, music is inherently social. Music is deeply embedded in our social structure. All the examples above involve a social context. Even when you sing in the shower, you typically have an audience in mind. The context of all musical performances, solo or collective involves social relationships.

2. **Supporting Relationships:** Music is listened to in families, among lovers, with friends, with parents and kids of all ages. Some tunes are unique and special between siblings, parents, grandparents, or romantic partners. Remember your favorite dance tune – one that you and your friends, got up and danced together? It was a joyous group experience. Most of us hearken back to a tune that is special for unique (often teenage) relationships. Music is the glue that binds us, reminds us of times that were upsetting or uplifting, but in the context of relationships, the most powerful medium that strengthens our interpersonal connections.
3. **Solidifying Identity:** In a similar fashion, music, often specific genres, songs, lyrics have special meaning to adolescents and young adults – earmarking and becoming emblematic of their identity. During those seminal years of high school and young adulthood, there is a fundamentally important place songs hold in personal and collective identity formation.
4. **Evoking Feelings and Attendant Memories:** Music is probably among the most powerful stimuli that stirs emotions. It makes

us feel happy, sad, scared, makes us want to get up and dance or clap our hands. This is perhaps the greatest power of music. And many tunes evoke memories associated with the music – memories of music at your special birthday party, at the prom or sadly, at a funeral. We all can recall a tune symbolic of an important event. Remember your first romantic partner, and “our song”? Even though they broke up with you, and you were devastated, when you hear that special song, you smile as it brings you back to driving in the car with them. Many of our old memories are associated with music. This is one way that folks with dementia sharpen their autobiographical memory when they hear songs of the childhood. Long-term memory certainly remains beyond loss of short term, and music may well be the trigger of earlier life experience.

5. **Triggering Movement:** Who can listen to gospel music, or attend a rock concert without tapping your feet, clapping your hands, or wanting to get up and dance. There is an intrinsic component of music as we will see in its neurobiology, that is linked to rhythm, dance, and drumming. Music is inherently physical, and the combination of playing, listening, singing, and dancing has been fundamental to all cultures. Music’s rhythmic structure and tempo are intrinsically powerful. We will see how the combination of music and dance has profound therapeutic potential (as well as intense synergy) for our enjoyment.
6. **Accentuating the Value of Hymns and Anthems:** A particular place of music in society is its symbolizing a specialized group. Common examples include national anthems, university fight songs, most often supporting their athletic teams, and military marches. Many tear up when they hear *America the Beautiful*, the *Star-Spangled Banner* or *Anchors Away*. It stirs up connection to something we treasure as a community, but it also brings tears to our eyes, if we hear the national anthem at a baseball game we powerfully recall when our mom or dad took us to the ballgame. Much of this reminds us of seminal events in our lives and amplifies our emotional responses of elation, drama, loss, or other evocative events we never forget.

Another function of the anthem is to amplify the history of nations, communities, spiritual and cultural groups, movements, or organizations by calling up special events and missions through the integration of narrative and poetic pieces. This often evokes elation, nostalgia, or melancholy. For example, the songs of Woody Guthrie remind us about the perils of immigration, the migration West, the losses from the Dust Bowl, and the formation of Unions. His music documented the adversity of his times, and the toll it took on sectors of the population. The chants of slaves on the chain gang helped offset the emotional and physical burdens, distracting them from pain, and at the same time provided a means for their bonding against oppression. In that light, music has served to stir emotions, and associate groups of people with missions – like the folk songs of protest in the 1960s.

7. **Amplifying and Coloring Other Art Forms:** When was the last time you saw a film without a soundtrack? Music adds coloration, mood, character, and amplification of action to film in powerful (or subtle) ways. Music makes Broadway shows come alive, and often we remember the tunes more than the plot. So, too in dance, opera, circuses, and other forms of performance art. They rely on music as a fundamental part of the art form. Musical themes often represent characters, like Grandpa in *Peter and the Wolf*, or the Wicked Witch of the West (you know she is coming when you hear the music!)
8. **Fostering Personal Expression and Communication with Others:** Individual expression through music and dance may be accomplished collectively or individually. When we sing together, play music together, or dance together something special happens. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We simultaneously can connect with ourselves (no one dances the same as anyone else!) and bond with others. Personal expression, on the other hand, is embodied in a solo improvisation on an instrument, or a solo verse in a song. And it is the epitome of communicating with others. For example, in many tunes, trading 4s or 8s (each person taking a solo for 4 or 8 measures) is

common in jazz. And call and answer is a cornerstone of many tunes, especially seen in songs supporting a collective mission, from chain gangs, to protest songs to hymns in church. Turn taking allows all of us to join in the song. In *The Weight*, by The Band, for example, each verse is sung by a band member, and the chorus is performed collectively in harmony. Writing music for yourself or others, with or without lyrics, is a clear statement of who you are and how you are feeling.

9. **Managing Emotions:** Music has been clearly demonstrated to significantly influence our emotional states. This ranges from fostering soothing attachments between parents and infants through lullabies, to passive listening of music preparing for medical procedures, to simply listening to your playlist with friends or alone, when you need to modify your anger, sadness, or simply feel calmer. The power of music to evoke, quell, or amplify emotions is well documented.
10. **Promoting Distraction:** Sometimes music is used to help us divert our attention. As we will see, in pre- and post-operative states, music is extremely effective in reducing anxiety and pain. In addition, it may help distract us from emotional upset and/or trauma by re-directing our attention, for example, if we didn't do a great job on an exam, or in the workplace; or if we had a fight with a partner. Sometimes, we use music to re-direct our feelings.
11. **Improving Cognition and Coordination:** Music lessons can help kids (and later adults) improve many aspects of their thinking and motor skills. For patients with dementia, the same is true, as we will see below in the Chapter 2. For some kids with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, music may be beneficial in communication, social interactions and diminishing stereotypic behavior, such as hand flapping. And for older folks, it has shown to help cognitive functions, and diminish movement disorders in Parkinson's Disease. For younger kids, music has helped learn numbers, new languages, colors and more. Sesame Street and its clever songs enhance learning.

DEFINING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Without being utterly pedantic, I want us to think about how we define “health” and “well-being.” The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Before we can figure out how music can enhance these states of being, they need some clarification.

What is so valuable about this definition is that it acknowledges that health does not rule out the presence of illness (MacDonald et al., 2012). After all, we all have some illness, and one can be “healthy” despite having diabetes, cardiovascular illness, depression, or another physical infirmity. Furthermore, it indicates that health is not simply dependent on the professional treatment of clinicians, but may be fostered, despite illness, by social, emotional, cultural, or creative arts. Thus, taking health out of the hands of professional caregivers broadens the concept tremendously (MacDonald, 2013).

However, neither here nor in much of the medical or health-related literature is well-being defined. I think this requires attention, particularly if we intend to see how music can enhance so-called well-being.

PERMA AND PERMA +4

Seligman defines the framework of well-being as involving: **Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (PERMA)**. This has become the cornerstone of the school of positive psychology. Briefly, **Positive emotions** can come to the fore from the past, present and hope for the future. **Engagement** is one’s application of skills to challenging tasks. **Relationships** are our connection with others, and bring us support, comfort, enjoyment, and the ability if needed to resolve conflict. They also provide us with a sense of belonging, so we do not feel alone. **Meaning** is how we value our purpose and role in family, spiritual groups, community, work, and take pride in our role and place within these structures. And finally, **Accomplishments** are how we view our sense of mastery, achievement in any domain (Seligman, 2002).

Well-being is highly individualized. This is super important! We each work and take on these building blocks to a greater or lesser degree. Well-being is viewed as a dynamic and ongoing mission that offers us greater and greater satisfaction. We all use different tools to attain higher levels of each building block – and music is one of many. Research has shown that the more we attain higher degrees of well-being within these domains, we improve our overall health, daily functioning, emotional state, sense of identity, personal pride, and competence among other attributes.

Seligman was criticized that **PERMA** did not include some very important elements that are vital for well-being, and hence the development of **PERMA +4** (Seligman, 2018). This would include Physical Health, Mindset, Work Environment, and Economic Security. **Physical Health** includes the highest levels of biological assets, such as optimal sleep, diet, nutrition, as well as high levels of functioning despite physical limitations, often due to illness. **Mindset** is defined as a “growth” mindset – the belief that one’s abilities and talents can develop over time, and that we can learn from our failures. **Work Environment** involves the physical, social, and cultural features of our workplace and how we cope with them. All of us are influenced by the context within which we work. Hopefully, awareness of deficits in the workplace will motivate us to foster change. Finally, **Economic Security** was added as it is well-established that financial matters are a strong predictor of well-being. To the extent we can have control over our financial situation, make reasonable decisions that are responsible for ourselves and our families, and strive to improve our economic status, our well-being will improve (Donaldson & Ellardus van Zyl, 2022).

What I like about this multidimensional model is that it is fluid, and considers the individual’s role, emotional and mental state, social role, and the influence of community in its broadest sense in achieving well-being (Iasiello et al., 2017). Thus, one might literally be dying, in palliative care, and with sufficient elements of **PERMA +4**, be in a state of positive well-being. By the same token, a person of great economic means, with all the social and material benefits, at least superficially, might have far lower well-being. Like everything else, it’s all relative.

I am taking the time to delineate these elements of well-being because they are all interconnected, but if music can enhance any

one or more of them, we can improve health. I think the most powerful testimony to the individuality of well-being and the ways music enhances our physical and mental conditions, is reading the personal and intimate vignettes of a several individuals in Chapter 3, considering what we can do to implement the benefits of music. Please keep PERMA+4 in mind.

THE ROLE OF HAPPINESS IN WELL-BEING

Isn't it odd that nothing above connected well-being to happiness? After all, if you are in a pretty good state of well-being, you should be happy, right? And for most of us, music, even sad music, makes us happy. So, shouldn't it contribute to well-being?

The Dali Lama, in a keynote at the 7th Global Spa & Wellness Summit (April 2022), noted that

happiness is the key to overall wellness. There are a few things that are necessary to achieve a happy life apart from physical wellbeing and these include a happy mind, compassion, trust, friendship, and affection. (Dali Lama, 2013)

While we could consider compassion, trust, friendship, and affection as a part of healthy relationships, the key addition to our concept of well-being is having a happy mind. Happiness is an independent variable, given the PERMA +4 components above. For example, you can suffer from a chronic physical illness, have difficulty engaging in challenges, failed accomplishments, but offset by positive relationships, social supports, and perhaps with the use of music as one of the creative arts in our toolbox, have a happy mind. If your mindset, the compassion and affection from others, among other variables line up, you can feel happy. It is not easy, but it is attainable. We need happiness as an overall goal for well-being.

Remember that health and well-being are not static or linear. We all have our ups and downs. When bad things happen, we dip in our sense of well-being. Thus, efforts at being resilient, and having means to bounce back is of vital importance. As I hope to show, music, among other creative arts, is one way to reclaim our sense of well-being.