



Musical intersubjectivity

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses a theoretical perspective on intersubjectivity, following the path of modern developmentally informed psychology. The text incorporates the four formats of intersubjectivity at a practical level as well. These different formats are individually illustrated with music therapy practice, before some reflections on relational music experiences as real lived experiences. Intersubjective meaning can be experienced at different layers and in a variety of modes, connects to a local context, and to microprocesses in the here-and-now. From a musical point of view, meaningful co-creation within the frame of intersubjectivity is performed through musical elements, for example, movements, rhythms, and dynamic shifts. Such a phenomenal musical relationship then, is interactive in nature and is interpreted in time and context. The musical experiences involved music as an art form, which means an intersubjective music experience is always more than meets the eye.

Introduction

“Why don’t you hold on to the term ‘golden moments’ instead of using ‘significant moments’, Colwyn Trevarthen asked me from his seating at the back of the room. As a new PhD Fellow of music therapy, I was presenting my qualitative PhD project with the working title “Significant moments in music therapy improvisation with young people suffering from an eating disorder” at a doctoral course in Aalborg close to twenty years ago. In the presentation, I had referred to my master thesis focusing on musical interplay with mothers and children in a music therapy group, in which I had used the term ‘golden moments’ (Trollaldalen, 1997a, 1997b).² Looking back, I suppose I tried to use what I (at that time) thought was the most ‘academic’ term and decided to use ‘significant moment’ in my PhD (Trondalen, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007). Thus, Colwyn Trevarthen, this scholarly man with the gift to engage in a fresh PhD student’s work, was right of course, not least due to the project’s qualitative and phenomenological research methodology. Today, I would have used the term, ‘golden moments’. The forthcoming years, meetings with Trevarthen and his research engagement greatly influenced my work in many ways. His inspiration

and influence is evident (Trevarthen, 1980), not least visible in the book *Relational Music Therapy. An Intersubjective Perspective* (Trondalen, 2016).

Another personal meetings with Trevarthen, took place on a sunny afternoon at Holmen Fjord Hotel at Asker, outside Oslo. We had been attending the three-days symposium “Music, Motion, and Emotion”.³ As a closure, we invited two of the participants, Stein Bråten and Colwyn Trevarthen, these international authorities within infancy and communication research, to a luncheon addressing topics on human communication in general—and children, music and health in particular (Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012). The informal luncheon involved an interesting dialogue on intersubjectivity, alter-centric participation, primary and secondary intersubjectivity, feelings, musicality and time, which were discussed and related to historical and recent research.⁴

The present text bear this interview in mind, while drawing a special attention to *music therapy and intersubjectivity*. I will firstly present briefly on communicative musicality, intersubjectivity and the relational turn, which form the basis for shifting from a one-person to a two-person model of human development, before I address some core values of my approach to music therapy. Furthermore, the hub in the

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² In my master thesis, which was written in Norwegian (Trollaldalen, 1997a), I used the notion of ‘gyldne øyeblikk’ (i.e. ‘golden moments’). While the published English version of the research project focused on “appreciative recognition” as the core concept (Trollaldalen, 1997b).

³ Thanks to the generosity of professor Hallgjerd Aksnes. The symposium was a part of the three years research project “Music, Motion, and Emotion. Theoretical and Psychological Implications of Musical Embodiment” headed by Aksnes. The project was supported by The Norwegian Research Council and the University of Oslo.

⁴ The interview in question is completed with several explanations in the footnotes as well as significant references at the end of the text (Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012).

text, intersubjectivity, is presented within its four formats. Each format is briefly illustrated with examples from music therapy practice. Finally, I reflect upon music, music therapy and intersubjectivity, while linking these phenomena to real lived relationship experience— and to music as an art form.

Theory

Every human being has an inherent musicality, which allows for a dynamic and sympathetic state of a human being that permits a co-ordinated companionship to arise, a *communicative musicality* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen & Malloch, 2000). The individual is born with a biological preference for human contact, a ‘protomusicality’ (Bateson, 1975), which makes contextual communication, development and learning possible. Trevarthen remembered (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012):

But what really got me interested in the inner time sense of human beings was the participating of very young babies in dancing protoconversations with their mothers, and the melody of the sounds they made together. I knew from the beginning that their affectionate talk was the same as song! And Mary Catherine Bateson and Daniel Stern came to the same conclusion. We all three discovered infants’ conversational abilities at the same time, around 1970, but we did not know about each other for several years!

The researchers discovered that central elements in such a creation of a communicative musicality are joint timing and joint formation of a melodic contour, texture and intensity, and a joint or shared narrative form. Communicative musicality involves the human capacity for creating relationship through non-verbal expression (Malloch, 1999; Trevarthen, 1985, 1999). Trevarthen continued (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012):

For more than 10 years I collected information on the intimate patterns of expressive movement between mothers and infants attempting to give a precise account taking account of the shared timing. Then, in 1985, I collaborated with Steven Malloch who gave me the means for giving a precise account of the parameters of their collaboration. Stephen’s knowledge of music for acoustics made it possible to be precise about what we have been working on since 1967. The result of our collaboration is the theory of “Communicative Musicality”, and the joint editorship of the book with that title.

Such a phenomenal musical relationship then, is interactive in nature and is interpreted in time and context (Trondalen, 2016).

The notion of the *relational turn* forms the basis for shifting from a one-person (‘monadic’) to a two-person (‘dialogic’) model of human development. We have a movement from Freud’s classical view to a dyadic view on development. Relationship and feelings “over-rules” drives as the dynamic force for development and change. Such a relational perspective on human development represents concepts *within* a paradigm rather than one unified therapy (Binder, Nielsen, Vøllestad, Holgersen, & Schanche, 2006). Through video observation (during the 1970s and 1980s) it was possible to analyze *microprocesses* in communication between infants and caregivers, revealing a heretofore unrecognized competent child being able to connect to— and influence its surroundings (Bateson, 1975; Stern, 1985/2000; Stern, /, 2000; Stern, 1985/2000; Trevarthen, 1974, 1980, 1985, 1998). Feelings are indeed important in this process (The Boston Change Process Study Group, 2010). In the interview (Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012), Trevarthen said:

It is hugely important to give feelings authoritative, causal and creative voice in intentions and relationships, instead of treating them as the opposite – effects or consequences, or just protective biological regulations of the body.

The present path of *intersubjectivity* resonates with modern

developmentally informed psychology. From a *theoretically* point of view, intersubjectivity links to three ways of understanding: 1) as a domain of development, 2) as an inborn capacity and disposition (or “motif”; Trevarthen, 1980)—that is, a relational dimension in itself (an intersubjective matrix; Stern, 2004). Additionally, the flow of mutual exchanges supports the creation of a third form of intersubjectivity, 3) an intersubjective field (Tronick, 1998).

Intersubjectivity then, connects to a local context, to microprocesses in the here-and-now (Hansen, 2010). It is interpersonal, mutually created and includes a shared world of meaning (Bråten, 1998; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001; Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978). Intersubjectivity concerns creating mental contact, which is non-verbal (implicit) and happens within a procedural framework where experience, body, and affects are core elements. It is more about seeing and perceiving than searching for explicit meaning (Stern, 2004). Trevarthen and Hubley (1978) define intersubjectivity as a deliberately sought sharing of experiences about events and things. Three mental states are evident in intersubjectivity: joint attention, sharing of intentions, and affective states. It is noteworthy that these mental states can be shared without translation into language, and they occur in both expressive and receptive music therapy (Trondalen, 2016).

In plain language, intersubjectivity involves a feeling of “I know that you know that I know” and “I feel that you feel that I feel”. It is about being together and also having the *feeling* of being together. It entails an appraisal of reading of the content of the other person’s mind. At a *practical* level, intersubjectivity, presents itself through four interaction formats (Hansen, 2012, pp. 85–86):

- i) primary intersubjectivity
- ii) secondary intersubjectivity
- iii) tertiary intersubjectivity
- iv) tertiary intersubjectivity of second order

It is noteworthy to recognize that “A curious property with intersubjectivity is that it seems to be easier to note when it’s not present” (Børstad, 1992, p. 115). Following, a breakdown in intersubjectivity, for example, through traumatic events, very often leads to isolation and loneliness. Intersubjectivity is basic to our existence.

Intersubjective meaning can be experienced at different layers and in a variety of modes, of which includes processes at a microlevel. From a musical point of view, meaningful co-creation within the frame of intersubjectivity is performed through *musical elements*, for example, movements, rhythms, and dynamic shifts (Bjørkvold, 1989; Johns, 1993, 2018).

Intersubjectivity in music therapy practice

Music therapy

The following examples from music therapy practice have some *core values* underpinning the music therapy approach (Trondalen, 2018). The human being is a communicate one (*homo communicans*), emerging from an *inborn musicality*. *Improvisation* is evident, as is *user involvement* and the focus on the client’s *resources*. As a music therapist, I am not avoiding problems, conflict or pathological aspects per se. Instead, my perspective actively focuses on supporting creative health resources rather than primarily the client’s medical problems or constraints in life. In addition, the *context*, in which the music therapy takes place is of utmost importance, as is the musical *relationship*. *Music* is seen as both an agent and a field of communication. In daily practice, expressive or receptive *methods of music therapy* is chosen in line with the clients’ need and the local context, in which the music therapy is offered.

Having presented a brief overview of theoretical aspects of intersubjectivity and core values in my music therapy approach, I will next turn to the four different formats of intersubjectivity and illustrate these through music therapy practice.⁵

Primary intersubjectivity

The first format is primary intersubjectivity. Primary intersubjectivity is the immediate sense of joint attention and emotional synchronization and regulation. Intersubjectivity emerges through mutual affective exchange including imitation, and through crossmodal exchange of form and contours in a face-to-face contact within a time frame (Trevarthen, 1980, 1999). Crossmodal exchange means that the exploration of the interplay may occur across different modalities as the persons continue to relate to each other. It is a contact on the basis of form and contour within a time span (Hansen, 2010).

I was called to a bedside at the hospital. Siri (7 years) with juvenile arthritis was indeed uneasy. She was to receive her medication intravenously, which she found very painful. I had brought the guitar and improvised a song, similar to the style of a lullaby. Attentively, I attuned my voice, intensity and tempo, to synchronize with her emotional state, before I slowly changed the music into a new rhythmical pattern with other chords than previously. Her heavy breathing gradually transformed to a slow pace. The improvisation had moved gently into a blues rhythm and we started humming together in the music. "I like this music", she said with a pale smile, "I feel better now".

In the example, there seemed to be joint attention, emotional synchronization and eventually regulation through sharing of intentions (Trevarthen, 1980) during the music improvisation, which lasted for about 14 min. This face-to-face setting included sensed attention and synchronization emerging from the affect exchange, which took place through musical utterances such as humming and rhythmic give-and-take. Such an emotional 'contagion' through mirror neurons is well known in neurobiology (Brean & Skeie, 2019). Also, Stern (2004, p. 95) referred to neurobiology saying "this prereflective experience of intersubjective openness can be seen as emerging from mechanisms such as mirror neurons, adaptive oscillators, and other similar processes likely to be found soon."

The musical improvisation seemed to provide a bridge between an inner state of being and the outer form and contours in the music expression. According to Bråten (1998), human being (and even infants) are by nature prepared to encounter "virtual others" within the intersubjective matrix. Through timing and a joint experience of being together in the musical relationship, Siri said she felt better due the music and our joint music making.

Secondary intersubjectivity

Secondary intersubjectivity is joint attention linked to a focus or object outside oneself, while realizing both the interaction itself and an awareness of being an active co-creator of one's own and another's intra- and interpersonal worlds. Social referring and sharing of affects are linked to a shared and joint focus outside oneself (Stern, 1985/2000; Stern, /, 2000; Stern, 1985/2000; Trevarthen & Hubble, 1978).

The 12-year-old girl, Silje, was hospitalized to a child psychiatric care due to her Anorexia Nervosa. We had 9 music therapy sessions over a period of 4 months. In the second session, Silje improvised through different bird calls while I played the piano. Later in the session we improvised on the piano together. Silje played the treble and I played the bass, while exploring the theme "being together". We also performed two more improvisations, involving chime barettes, piano, hand drums and maracas. As a summing up of the session she wrote: "Music therapy is more difficult and more demanding than 'usual' therapy". I asked: "Why is that so?". Silje answered: "Because you cannot hide within the music, and because you give more of yourself in the music making."⁵

⁵ The brief theoretical descriptions of the four interaction formats in intersubjectivity are drawn directly from Trondalen (2016), pp. 15-16).

⁶ For a thorough description see Trondalen (2016), pp. 27-28).

The example elucidated a musical exchange through instruments. Silje and I knew that we both knew we were sharing something through our improvisation, while we were creating a new history together. In other words, "Narratives may be made in wordless gesture or playing an instrument" (Trevarthen in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012). The sharing of affects was linked to the shared and joint focus outside ourselves (here: instruments), while still being aware of the interaction between us. We were both active co-creators of our own- and the other's interpersonal world, not least confirmed by Silje's immediate response of not being able to "hide in the music". Such a social referring and sharing of affects are linked to a shared, however not identical, world and focus outside oneself (Stern, Hofer, Haft, & Dore, 1985; Trevarthen & Hubble, 1978).

Tertiary intersubjectivity

Tertiary intersubjectivity is communication through symbols, verbal exchange, and narratives, including integration of affects (Bråten, 2007). Play is an important part of this type of intersubjective exchange. The following example is from a group of young mothers and children within a Child Care Institution (Trolldalen, 1997b; Trondalen, 2016, pp. 70-71).

"What can we do next?", I asked, while we were lying on the floor. One of the children said, "Stand up." We stood up and the music therapist said, "Everybody can stand and hold each other's hand." Everybody was singing and dancing in a circle: "Yes, we are dancing together now, dancing together now." After a short while (about 20 s), I changed the text to "dancing with mummy, dancing now" and moved to the piano. The circles dissolved and the mother-and-child dyads were moving toward each other. The mothers and children danced together as pairs. One of the children jumped up to her mother, who immediately raised him up and swung him around. Shortly after that all the mothers began lifting and swinging their own children high in the air. I picked up on the activity while singing: "Swinging around, do it now, swinging around up high." Lots of laughter and fun.

The mothers and children were offered a new way of relating through the musical activity, initiated by one of the children. The dynamic forms of vitality (Stern, 2010), these inner experiences of being alive, seemed contagious. I propose the mother and child experienced a musical "dance of well-being" (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2000). This resonates with Trevarthen's comment on musicality, "[...] there is a musicality in everything we do well, in its graceful narrating." (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012).

Winnicott (1971, p. 50) stated, "Playing is an experience, always a creative experience, and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living." Playing is neither outside each of the dyads, nor is it the external world per se. The words expressed through the song ("dancing together") seemed to support the dyadic bonding as their inner feelings linked to an outer reality. The musical activity offered a "potential space" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 41), which allowed for an experience, in that change (a property of time) can take place. Such an experience transcends the boundaries between inner and outer realities. I suggest that playing is creative and occurs in a temporally and spatially structured place defined by a variety of dimensions, allowing for a range of subjective experiences including the cultural experience of music (Trondalen, 2016, p. 137).

Tertiary intersubjectivity of second order

Tertiary intersubjectivity of second order (Bråten, 2007; Hansen, 2010) is about the ability to attribute feelings, intentions, and thoughts both to oneself and to others (mentalization). In other words, this is a perspective on a "mental life" that creates preconditions for reflecting and thinking about oneself and others beyond the here-and-now. This

format includes the ability to integrate experiences into autobiographical narratives as well.

The following example is from receptive music therapy (Trondalen, 2019)⁷, namely the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM), GIM in short. During a GIM session (which lasts 1,5-2 h), the client listens to music (30–45 minutes) in a relaxed state of mind, while the therapist makes a written transcript of the music journey (Bonny, 1978; Grocke, 2019).

Caroline was a woman in her 30 s, seeking personal growth through GIM. During the music listening a variety of different images⁸ occurred. The images, intensity and flow of rhythm quite often synchronized with the music, even down to a microlevel, observable from moment to moment in her body language and in the images. At one time, Caroline visualized herself at a sports arena, as she related to her personal feelings of herself—and others—while saying, “I am free”. The experience was as much affective and interactive as cognitive. Intensity, timing, and form in the music suited her well and gave a warm body feeling, she said. Another time, Caroline observed a tension in the music and suddenly she found herself in the middle of the music, while describing a pleasant sandstorm of colors and feelings. An important moment occurred during Rachmaninoff’s 2nd Symphony (Adagio), where she forgave two significant persons in her life.

The images and experiences that emerged during the music listening segment, made the starting point for the verbal reflection as they offered an exploration of the link between Caroline’s inner and outer world. This might be linked to Trevarthen’s comment in the interview (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012):

But then, hearing and feeling with the body, is different. [...] Because I want to try to work out with her the relationship between feelings of the body and its movements and seeing beauty. There are some things that we see with feeling, like the colour or flowers or fruit or the sunset or something, and also the human body, and especially the lively beauty of children. And that’s very different than seeing objects of practical use, which is mostly what we do with every-day vision.

It seemed as if Caroline was able to connect a variety of images to the music in such a way that she was able to take care of herself, in other words, perform self-agency (Stern, 1985/2000Stern, /, 2000Stern, 1985/2000). For example, the client connected to the basso and her personal instrument (the clarinet) as well, as she visualized her personal sound through her playing. Following, cognitive, emotional, and relational aspects were knit together and merged into self-biographic narratives—for example, the explicit meaning of music and colors in her life. Caroline recognized that inner and outer realities affected each other without being identical realities (Hansen, 2012; Stern, 1985/2000Stern, /, 2000Stern, 1985/2000).

A shared sense of time and rhythm within the musical intersubjective matrix (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2000) seemed to deepen Caroline’s experience and support further exploration, such as mentalization. Mentalization is a spontaneous and implicit process, which include explicit language, symbols, and artifacts such as art and music. It is a core concept for promoting regulation of feelings (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002; Hannibal, 2014; Strehlow, 2013). The process of mentalization seemed to validate the experiences of who Caroline was and what she was doing. I suggest GIM provided building

blocks for her inner mental representation, bridging the gap between her physical, mental, and existential dimensions in life.

The music listening experience may have involved a joint intersubjective recognition and given rise to a new implicit intersubjective understanding (Lyons-Ruth, 1998). Hence, a new way of being with the other evolved, exemplified through Caroline’s choice to forgive important persons in her life. From a theoretical point of view, this could be termed an expansion of the intersubjective field (Tronick, 1998) as a potent experience of development and change.

Reflections

Intersubjective meetings in music involve sharing joint- but not identical experiences. What is shared is linked to the musical relationship and context in a broad sense. It is also connected to whether the involved are a mother/father and a child or an adult client and a therapist. That is, musical intersubjectivity is multifaceted, be it at a practical, theoretical or philosophical level (Haugvik & Johns, 2008; Holgersen, 2006; Trondalen, 2016). The musical vignettes involved music both as an agent and a field of exploration. During the playing and /or listening to music, the participants seemed to experience an embodied feeling of the different dynamics of the music, through joint attention, sharing of intentions, and affective states, which are all building blocks within intersubjectivity (Stern, 1985/2000Stern, /, 2000Stern, 1985/2000; Trevarthen, 1980; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001).

All of the musical examples within the four formats of intersubjectivity, afforded a sense of a shared mental states. In the first example, the music consisted of a certain rhythm and dynamics, before I slowly changed the music into a new pattern with selected chords (blues). It seemed as if Siri linked to the changing intensity and melody in the music, as her heavy breathing gradually transformed to a slower pace. In Silje’s case, she firstly chose bird calls, which allowed for expression of intensity and breathing in certain ways. She used her breath to give ‘sounding lives’ to the flutes in the joint improvisation. Furthermore, the children in the third example, enjoyed musical playing and singing both in dyads and in the group. Caroline, on her side, observed a tension in the music as she suddenly found herself in the middle of the music, while describing a pleasant sandstorm of colors and feelings. All of which were shared and explored together with the music therapist, also in a verbally alert state of mind after the music listening experience. In a music therapy relationship, the musical experiences emerged as *lived relationship experiences*, which may have led to an expansion of the intersubjective field, that is, a potent experience for development and change.

I suggest all of the music examples elucidated musical intersubjectivity, which is primarily about seeing and being aware of, rather than searching for explicit meaning. Within such a musical intersubjective experience, the involved parties may have experienced *what* inner feeling states could be shared, and what remained individually unrevealed. Musical intersubjectivity relates to the here-and-now and can be shared without a necessary translation into verbal language, even if the client expresses herself or himself through words on a daily basis (Stern, 1985/2000Stern, /, 2000Stern, 1985/2000). The examples showed the intersubjective field emerging through musical improvisations and a music listening procedure, in which the participants acquired the ability to experience the world and themselves through a relationship. Each individual became more, ‘bigger’, and different from being on her/his own. In the interview Trevarthen said (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012),

Oh, I think music therapy is gaining a strong, scientifically grounded, place at last, in spite of the scepticism [sic.] of the medical profession. [...] It makes effective application of key concepts of the theory of embodied intersubjectivity, which is gaining ground. [...] I’m interested in elementary dynamics, but often also to the expressive parameters of musicality that Steven Malloch

⁷The example is elaborated in depth in the book chapter “GIM and Life Transition: A relational perspective” (Trondalen, 2019, pp. 97-114).

⁸According to Goldberg (2002), p. 360) “Imagery” or “image” refer to “experiences of music during the listening phase of BMGIM, including images in all sensory modalities, kinesthetic images, body sensations, feelings, thoughts and noetic images (an intuitive sense of imaginal events that arise outside of other imagery modes)”.

specified as *pulse*, *quality* and especially *narrative*. The idea that narrative can be without words or specific reference worries those who focus on talk and text. Stephen's definition of narrative is the combination of organized pulse and quality in musical sound that enables people to share "a sense of purpose of passing time". Passing time means doing time you know by being, and moving, in time. And it may be shared...

Embodied intersubjectivity and dynamics were elaborated in depth in a recent research study by Johns (2018). On basis of microanalysis of musical parameters in selected samples of emotion regulation with children in time-limited intersubjective psychotherapy, she argued that musical parameters seemed to embody the child's feelings and intentions as well as organize intersubjective exchanges. Such an outcome may also have been the case in the illustrative examples in the present text. Furthermore, Johns (2018) suggested the concept of *musical dynamics* as a description of these *lived relationship experiences over time*.

The musical examples in this text aimed at creating joint meaning in such a way that similarities and differences could be explored and shared through music and musical elements, for example, through movements, rhythms, and dynamic shifts. These experiences seemed to afford a shared sense of time, rhythm and narratives within the musical intersubjective matrix (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen, 1999). All of which happened within a timeframe. Time is the "fourth dimension in integration, "according to Winnicott (1961, in Davis & Wallbridge, 2011, p. 169), as it gives form and meaning to life. Trevarthen said (in Stensæth & Trondalen, 2012):

I think children definitively can go into reflective states where they seem to be suspended in time. They become still and look at the distance, and they stop smiling. But I don't think that the child has a problem with time at all. In them, they are moving in time, and I think that they - not only that - they have a sense of extended time, because of things, events, which have importance. [...] So, I don't think many, many things that are huge problems in philosophy are not problems for children at all: Sympathy, time, narration and music. Music is so natural for them.

Transferred to a music experience, every piece of music, pre-composed or improvised, unfolds in time and space, but at the same time, music is not bounded by these characteristics as it is experienced both within an objective ('chronos') and a subjective ('kairos') timespan. An intersubjective experience through music allows for transcending the boundaries between inner and outer realities and create new narratives of different modes. Trondalen (2016), p. 130) wrote:

The musical relationship in itself offers new ways of being with another, an existential experience different from anything else. Hence, one experiences the musical situation as a whole, acquiring self-agency as a first person as the experience itself is transformed into something new. In this way, musical intersubjectivity connects to the mode of surrender, and to the potential for transformation. Musical intersubjectivity offers an exploration and expansion of the intersubjective field, a way to develop and support new experiences in life.

Musical intersubjectivity cannot be planned but grasped and perceived in the here-and-now (Trevarthen, 1985, 1998). This can be a groundbreaking music experience or happen quietly in a daily music listening encounter. To verbally process the experiences and images emerging from a musical experience can increase the meaning of the experience, however, it does not replace the experience of meaning at a non-verbal level.

Closing words

This article has addressed a theoretical perspective on intersubjectivity, while also incorporating the four formats of

intersubjectivity at a practical level. These different formats are individually illustrated from music therapy practice, before some reflections on relational music experiences as real lived experiences. The experiences involved music as an art form, which means an intersubjective music experience is always more than meets the eye. Trondalen said (2016, p. 89):

The deepest nature of art (here, music) is inscrutable and linked to human existence. Music as an art form is multidimensional, alive, and created in a participating here-and-now. Seen from an artistic perspective, expressive and receptive music experiences are ambiguous, multilayered phenomena unfolding in time and space, yet paradoxically not bounded by these characteristics. Music allows for a variety of experiences at different levels while supporting the creation of new life stories. The phenomenal music therapy relationship then emerges as an art form—a field of relational lived experiences—emerging from an inborn, communicative musicality.

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