

The role of the instruments in a music therapy session with Old Oriental Music Therapy

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As a child. I was fascinated by a lot of stories a fairytales, but the most fascinating where thos from the countries of 1001 night. Everything there seemed to bee mysterious and has several meanings in the same time. This was, on one hand an impression of a child, but as I found out later in the music, this impression concerning the music and the instruments from this area came again. Now I use instruments from this 1001 world in my daily work as a musictherapist, and all of them are not jus sondmaking machines which are to be played by me, they are instruments with stories, emotions and legends that are told over several hundred years and seem to affect people, whether they know this stories or not. The instruments used in the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie are all models that go back for several hundred years. This by itself is no quality, but if you compare this instruments so modern classical instruments, there are some things, which make an important difference. The modern classical instruments as violin guitar ore traverse flute in their today's form, are all constructed to play in orchestras with harmonic music. Because in this Music, the natural frequencies of the intervals, especially the Quint ant Quart have changed to some compromise frequencies, it was necessary to avoid too much overtones in the instruments, otherwise a modern symphonieorchestra would produce a terrible sound. As the older instruments in Europe, the Middle East ore Islamic instruments are still built from the same principe as before inventing the European harmonic music. Because they are used for modal music "only" it is good to have as many overtones as possible, to get a special marcant sound from each instrument. So we can say that the instruments that are used in the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie are giving impulses of the natural sound matrix that is defined by the overtones and is connected to all sounds that can be heart in the nature. The human being himself now is part of this nature, we are not separated from it's, we are a part of what we are surrounded from. In my opinion, this is one of the most important messages, that can be given to a client, and I mean it not in a logical, but in an emotional way: Not to be separated from the world.

It is not only the richness of the overtones that makes people felt these instruments often very close to them. It is also the fact, that these instruments have as their example the human voice. Almost all this instruments are in the same Octave of the human voice ore one below. So the clients, that are treated with this instruments, are not listening to some sounds that have no connection their body, but they can listen to music, that has the same frequency as their voice, can be heard by them and can get the connection with their inner listening and finally with their own inner voice and world.

I want now describe the most important instruments that are used in my daily work, as I use an order of instruments exemplarily in a receptive music therapy session, which has shown good results in many times and is something like a “standard” order of using instruments in my work.

But before that, I want shortly to talk about what is happening in the music therapy., especially in a receptive session. As a music therapist, I cannot play problems away or make some magic wonders. But I can be as amplifier of the music that is surrounding us every time, and open up a space for the clients which may lead them out of the normal day time, in a space, that has connection with their inner world and their inner experience. The music therapist then has to define this space in the same moment as living space in progress, but also as a secure place. Finally than it can happen, what is the goal of all therapies, to create a space in which the client can find solutions in himself what can finally cause effective changes.

So please imagine now a receptive music therapy session , the client lays comfortably down and the therapist starts to play

The Ney

This instrument is considered as the „classical“Sufi instrument. As you know, Mevlana Rumi started his opus magnum Methnevi with a poem about the Ney. In this poem the Ney has the desire to go back to its origin to the reed place to his brothers and sisters, compared with a human being that is separated from its spiritual homeland, Allah, and is longing for to go completely back to it. But this is only one symbol and emotion that is connected with this instrument. A legend says, that the Ney was found, as the prophet Muhammad (as) told a secret to his cousin Ali, because he had asked so much for this. The only condition for Ali was that he would not tell this secret to anyone else. For three day, so the legend, it was possible for him, but after those days he couldn't stand it any longer and he ran out to the dessert and shouted the secret in a dry water hole. After a time it started raining g, and a shepherd passed by who cut one of the reeds, that had grown meanwhile in this waterhole, an made himself a ney out of it. He played very nice on it, what also came as news to the prophet Muhammad (as) one day, and he invited the shepherd to play for him. So it happened, and after the Prophet had heart the shepherd play, he spayed: “This shepherd plays the secret on his Ney that I have told Ali some time ago”

So the story may not be historical true, but it shows the near connection between the sound and the emotion that stands behind music that context we are talking about.

Another symbol from the Ney is the one of a perfect man, having seven holes for senses like the Ney, being cleared in his inner world as the Ney and being canal for the higher will, as the Ney gives sound only if somebody blows in it with his will.

The connections between emotions and instruments may be considered as a cultural specialty of the Islamic region, but, my experience in therapy work are similar to this symbols.

The Ney is a perfect instrument to open a therapeutic session. The sound of the Ney is like inventing the client to take part in the session. In being a natural instrument, its sound is in many times not so clear as a modern flute like a traverse flute, but especially this little "earthy" part in it is touching the clients, because it is the hearable connection to the nature. In the possibility to play long tones, that can also be variated with vibrato and microtonal changes of the tune, it comes in some way very close to the expression of the human voice. Also in playing it, I have the feeling that the sound comes directly from my body over the instrument to the air and to the listener, because it is my mouth, that is controlling a producing the sound. This instrument maybe gives the best example of what good musicians talk about in their feeling: that the instrument is not an own thing, it is an extent ion of the own human voice. So this long and rhythmicless tones, combined with the emotion of the human voice, seem to open the space in a musictherapeutical session perfectly. Often I saw, that in the moment I start to play, the behavior of the people in the room changes immediately, the attention grows from one moment to another, some people start to smile, stop talking, and the opening of the space and the invitation takes its place. So I have the possibility of taking the clients from where they are and guide them with the sound of the Ney into the space of music that will grow in the session. For this reason, after playing the long rhythmicless tones, normally an introduction in the used makam, known in the classical musiktheorie as "taksim", I start to improvise in the rhythm that I have chosen for the therapy. So the same Instrument, that has opened the way, now goes one step further and starts to define the musical space by a rhythm. This is in many times a 6/8 rhythm, what gives relaxation, but can also be a quicker 4/4 or some unsymmetrical rhythms, known in turkey as "aksak". In the regular work the clients already know: if he starts to blow the ney. The conditions of Musictherapie have started.

Maybe you know about the traditional Mevlvie ceremony, also the Ney is opening the ceremony and so the space of music, and dance, mediation and in consequence maybe finding the way to one self.

Continuing the rhythm, it becomes time to change to the next instrument. That the melody doesn't stop and the change is fluency, I use my voice with improvising, to make a musical bridge to the next instrument. But this using of the voice is also a remembrance for the client, at one hand to the human factor of the music and on the other hand to me as the leading therapist. Often I got the feedback that this using the voice gives a special positive impulse to the clients. But this voice part lasts only short.

The Rebab

This is maybe one of the most forgotten instruments in Turkey. Thanks to the work of Oruc Güvenc it is used again today in several countries. Mevlana Rumi often talks about it in his poems. At one place he tells a story, in which somebody calls the Rebab as the “sound of opening heaven’s door” Another man, obviously a small minded person says, that for him it is not like that. Mevlana replies, that some people hear the opening of heaven’s door, some the closing of it. Oruc also is telling a very nice Symbol of the Rebab, that he had heard from his teacher concerning Arab letters, but maybe he can speak about by himself.

Several times in the last years I heart that the work of Oruc maybe not has to be taken too serious in some ways. As an example one talked about the Rebab that he is supporting. One spayed, that this Instrument with the coconut and horsehair is not really an old Turkish or ottoman instrument, also in turkey there is no old example of it. So I was very astonished, as I saw two years ago in an exebition of the Vienna Musikfreunde, the most important musikorganisation of Austria, the one who owns the world famous Musikvereinsaal with the best acoustic in the world and the place of the famous new year’s concert, that this old foundation has started their very important music instrument collection with two instruments from the former ottoman empire around 1840, and one of this instruments is a Rebab! You can see it in the Vienna collection, a minimum 200 year old Rebab, made of coconut, three string, exactly as is is used by us in the therapies. Such an Instrument doesn’t exist in Turkey nowadays, and it is a nice thing for me, that in Vienna, a very important Turkish music cultural part was saved for mankind.

Really the sound of this instrument seems s to support a creative process in the listeners. Several times I got the feedback, that the sound of this instrument in the musictherapeutical work gives an impulse of opening doors to other dimensions of feelings, and together with this, experience and opening doors in the inner world. Remember what I told before about the creation of the musical space for the therapy. In a group that takes place regularly in Vienna a woman with the illness poreleosis says that every time, if I play the Rebab, her body relaxes, as she has the feeling of starting to fly and after the session all symptoms as headache or stress and tension in the muscles are much lighter or eventually gone. For her it is the Rebab, that she waits every time in the session. Like Mevlana says, the Rebab is against t sad mood, I use the Rebab also in situations, when I see people becoming trist or starting to cry. Beside, crying must not every time mean sadness. So sometimes if someone is close to cry, he or she starts to cry while the Rebab is playing, but then he or she stops and goes on in a better mood than before.

The specialty in playing the Rebab is that you can use very different ways of producing sounds. Varying the intension of pressing the fingers, the type of arching, it is possible to play very rhythmical but also long tones without rhythm, if necessary. So the variety goes from strong, loud tones till etheric sounds of pure overtones. Because the Rebab is in the same octave as the human voice, it is possible to imitate very close the human voice, and so, without using the voice ore changing the instrument, giving an impulse close to a spoken or sung word. So following the ney in the therapeutic setting, it is like a continuing and

developing the ney sound to a one that is close to it, but also different, at least also a different way of producing the sound, it changes from blowing to arching, which brings the instrument a little more away from the body of the one who plays it. While playing this instrument, it is possible also to sing or talk in the same moment, what is regular for all the other instruments, that are following, but was not for the begin with the ney. So in our musical space, the possibilities are growing...

In the progress of the therapeuting setting, often after the Rebab I am using an instrument, that has also an etheric sound, but changes from the long possible tones of ney and Rebab to the sound that is produced only by the picking with the finger toes, the one of the Ceng.

Ceng

It is surely one of the oldest types of instruments and it directly connects us with a very prominent college as a music therapist, with Prophet David, who did as we know Musictherapie for King Saul on an Instrument like this. If you look at the form of the Ceng it is similar to a ship, and as someone, who had worked as a taxidriver while studying the Musictherapie, I have a good relation with someone who is transporting people from one place to another. Also a therapist is someone who is guiding and helping people to get from one place to another, in the same moment as a guide and a servant to the client. Thanks to Oruc Güvenc and instrument builders as Feridun around him this instrument can again be heard today, even if it was died out before. It is also a personal desire that this instrument is heard in concerts again, so I play it on stage since more than ten years. I developed a personal technique, that is a mixture from my little piano knowledge and the Kanun playing, so I play with one hand the main tones of the makam, the base and the connection of the dörtli and besli (so called "güclü") and with the other hand, mainly one finger, the melody. So in the therapy, where I work regularly alone, I can play rhythm and melody in the same time. The sound of the Ceng, where every tone has an own string, and therefore it has no interruption from the next tone, is somehow etheric and airy, also a little bit like little waves on the water, as a client has described. So in the setting it is the perfect instrument to lead from the long tones of the opening Ney and the inviting Rebab, to spread the musical space for the client. The model of Ceng than I am using has the possibility to play two octaves, what sounds not much, but is far enough for the therapy. Another specialty of the Ceng is that in the session I can invite the clients to play also on it. If the instrument is tuned and stable in the tune, it is relatively easy to play a little melody on it. So the clients have a positive experience in using it, because immediately a sound and, in picking two strings, two tones appear in playing it. Especially in my work with handicaps as in the work with people with apallic syndrome the Ceng is one of my favorite Instruments. Because it is small, it is possible to put it on the client's body, so that the client can feel the vibration, also it is possible to put the clients hand on the membrane of the instrument, which is made of animal skin and you can feel the vibration very clear. In many cases the Ceng was the first contact to clients to participate active in the therapy session or to start to work active with

them. I have a client, a lady who has strong autistic syndrome and she lives is one of the institutions where I am working. Since some Years she comes to a regularly Musictherapie every week, and in many times she looks very uninterested. Normally she sits on the sofa and puts her finger in the ears, but at two instruments when I play them, she changes her behavior, and sometimes, in the latest time more often, she stands up and comes close to me and puts her head very close to the instrument. One of these instruments is the Ceng. Sometimes she starts to touch the strings and starts to smile and the same moment. The second Instrument that is catching her attention in the same way, and that is the next in my setting, again with a bridge of using the voice, is the

Tanbur

The Tanbur has somehow similar qualities in its sound as the Ceng, what comes from its long strings that are vibrating a long time, if you let your finger pressed at the frat. Also it is possible to variate the tone in shaking the whole instrument for a short time. So you can produce long sounding tones, also rich in overtones, but now one or two octaves deeper than the instruments before. So the musical space, which was spread by the Ceng, is now settled by the deeper sound of the Tanbur. That gives the space some ends, which, after opening and spreading it, is important for the confidence of the client. But nevertheless, this instrument is in many times mentioned from my clients in a special way, in the feedback talking, after the therapeutic session. Some told me, that in the moment when the first Tanbur sound appeared something like an electric wave ran through their body, and gave the determining impulse for this therapy session.

Even if this instrument is not known so much as for example the Ney, it has a lot of power in its sound and also it is a very old instrument, experts say, minimum 2000 years old. Also it is said, that Prophet David has played on it, Pythagoras has used it also for his research, The Byzantine word for Tanbur was “Tanburas” and Al Farabi mentioned two different forms of Tanbur, one of Baghdad and one of Chorasan. I think, also with my experience from the therapy, it is clear, that this instrument in Turkey and Persia is not used in the popular music, but only in the classical and the spiritual music, such as the one from the Mevlevie. It is clearly no instrument for fun, it is more serious!

After this instrument in my usual setting, again is coming a voice bridge, which leads to the next one, the Ud.

Ud

The Ud is known as the “piano of the orient”, because like on the piano, the music theory of the Islamic world is demonstrated on the Ud. The first one who did it, and who had a lot of influence till to the whole musictheroy, also till Europe, was the above mentioned Al Farabi.

And, as we have seen at the other instruments before, we can also see at the Ud, how music instruments were seen as a mirror of man. Like the Ney as a symbol for the “perfect man, Insani kamil” at the old time 4 stringed Ud (the base string was not played), was related to the human body. Every of the 4 strings was related to one of the fluids in the system of the humoral medicine. As we know today, the humoral medicine if you take it wordy it is nonsense. But if you change the words “fluids” for elements” this system gets a lot of sense, and is close to the traditional Chinese medic. That is the reason, why this humoralmedicin is taken for serious again by scientific doctors again in Europe and USA.

The following story of the Ud shows, how close the so called orient is connected with the so called occident. It is said, that the virtuos Ud player Zyrab had to flee from his hometown Baghdad, because of the callously of his not so well playing teacher. So he went to Spain, the al Andalus of that time, and brought the Ud there. There he invented the 5th string, and connected it with the human soul. So the mirror on the instrument was perfect, the 4 fluids of the body, and the soul on the same instrument. The connection to our day goes on, as from the “al Ud” the article was changed to a Romanic one “la” and from “la Ud” the word Laute / Luth / Lavda appeared, also the same named instrument, which was the mother of the guitar. So, to say it placative, there would be no Jimmy Hendrix, without the Ud. Beside: the Ud is not the only instrument which is an ancestor of the modern classic instruments, the Rebab is the grand grand mother of the violin, and the Ceng is the grand grand grand mother of the piano. But let us stay at the Ud in the therapeutic setting

In the setting, that we are following, the Ud gives a more earthy and stabile sound, than the Tanbur bervore. So it brings the musical space that we are visiting, now on earth and is manifesting it somehow. Also the clients say that they feel it as earthy, little bit like dancing music and full of life in a human way. So after we have opened the space, have invited to it and expanded it, we have settled it and now we bringing it to earth, where we have to live and to act. Therapy is only successful, if something stays in daily life after the therapy!

The Ud is in my point of view the main instrument for the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie of today. You can play melody, rhythm, and also some chords on this instrument. Also it is easy to play this instrument without looking on it; you can sing while playing it and give the same time a lot of attention to the client. So I am not using it only in the described way of a receptive session. Of cause also in the work with singing and playing together with the clients, in active sessions, the Ud is the most important instrument, because on none of the other ones it is possible to play so strong rhythmical.

But let's stay for a short while in our musical space. After the Ud, again a bridge of the human voice, leads me to the last one, and this is the same one, as in the very beginning, the Ney. So we come back to the sound of the beginning, we slowly go out of the musical space that was opened for and with the client, and the nay, which has opened it, is now on the way to slowly close it. In the therapeutic work I whiteness, that if I use the nay at the end of the session, the clients, that sometimes have started so relaxed very intensive, or even start to sleep, with the sound of the ney wake up again and come back to the consciousness of

everyday. First in this last part I am playing rhythmical, and then I change to play again long tones without rhythm, slower and slower, softer and softer, and finally the session is ending with long, soft deep tone.

Of course I have mentioned now the instruments that I use in the receptive Setting. But as I have mentioned above, this is only one part of the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie. Another part is the strong rhythmical playing for dance and movements, also for common playing with the clients. For this kind of work as I have mentioned, the Ud is the clear favorite Instrument. But there is some other that I want to describe shortly:

There is the Dombra

Dombra

The main part of the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie is historically organized a set in the great time of Islamic culture till the descend of the Ottoman Empire. But some roots are elder and some go back till the shamans of central Asia and one of the main instruments of these shamans is the Dombra. It is a very old and simple instrument, which has everything, what an instrument needs, but nothing more. Two strings, that makes it possible to play melody and a basic tone in the same time, like a bordune or also as intervals. Especially for the traditional shaman baksi dance, but also for pentatonic improvisation it is very useful. Also it is an Instrument that can be used by the clients. It can easily be tuned in a fitting way, and so the clients and the therapist can play real music together, without any musical knowledge of the client.

Another instrument is the Kilkopuz

Kilkopuz

Which is in its origins also a shamanic instrument from central Asia, which I am using sometimes for dance and pentatonic improvisation. Its shamanic roots is immediately seen and heard by then clients and usually touching them strongly.

The Rübab

Also o from central Asia is an Instrument picked with a plactron. It has a strong and loud sound, so I use it also for dance improvisations and pentatonic improvisations. It is also possible to arch it, then it has a very enteric sound, and I am using it sometimes instead ore after the Rebab in the receptive setting.

Chomus / Jewish harp

In the beginning I was talking about the importance of the overtones. This little instrument brings all the possibilities of the overtones to its extreme. I use it sometimes in the receptive sessions, and this instrument has a lot of possibilities. You can play little melodies, imitate nature sounds, but also play really abstract and psychedelic sounds. The clients experience this really strong impulse, that is leading them sometimes really into other worlds, of cause in a positive way. From a therapist of Yakutistan I have been told, that they are using it for therapy in a receptive way, but also against migraine and for people who have no voice to make possible for them to find a kind of speaking.

Thanks to Oruc give the possibilities to share my experiences with you and Hope that more research and experience will take part, I