

## Editorial: A Reflection on Liminal Spaces

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This year's journal brings together a range of contributions; a survey report, a community voices article, and two book reviews. The report presents findings from the 2022 survey of New Zealand Registered Music Therapists, offering valuable insights into the profession. The community voices piece explores innovative applications of technology within music therapy practice, highlighting creative possibilities for the future. The first book review examines *Music Therapy with Autistic Children in Aotearoa* (2022) by Daphne Rickson, a text that resonates deeply with practice in this field. The second review reflects on the second edition of *The Handbook of Music Therapy* (2024), edited by Leslie Bunt, Sarah Hoskyns, and Sangeeta Swamy, through the lens of the reviewer's own learning experience with the first edition.

Throughout the editorial process, from initial communication with authors to publication, there are many reflective moments reminiscent of the diverse rites of passage we all experience. The term "rites of passage" originated with anthropologist van Gennep (1960 [1909]) to describe universal human rituals which typically involve three distinct phases; separation, transition, and incorporation (also referred to as pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal rites). Within the transition phase lies the concept of liminality, a threshold state of transformation. The term *liminality* derives from the Latin *limes* ("threshold") or *limen* ("boundary" or "limit") (Wels et al., 2011). Turner (1969) further explored liminality as a stage where individuals retreat from societal structures, entering a space of "anti-structure," a bottom-up creative response that contrasts with the structured pre- and post-liminal stages characterised by status, power,

and authority. This liminal stage is essential for processing, development and transformation. We recognise that human life is fluid and consists of an ongoing series of rites of passage in many forms.

Music therapist Coombes (2022), expanding on Rudd's (1995) application of rites of passage theory to music therapy, reflects on music therapy as a liminal space; where clients enter sessions in a state of separation, experience transformation through music-making, and then return to daily life with new skills and insights. In this sense, music therapy mirrors the structure of rites of passage. As editors, contributors, and readers, many of us are music therapists. We support clients through their transitions while navigating our own.

Each manuscript we receive also undergoes a rite of passage; from initial submission, through the editorial process, to publication in the journal. From our perspective as editors, this liminal stage is a collaborative and creative endeavour as we work in partnership with authors, supported by reviewers and proofreaders, to polish their manuscripts (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Word cloud depicting the liminal elements of the editorial process*



Figure notes: Formed in the shape of a cocoon, the word cloud includes the following words: Editorial process, author, editor, reviewer, proofreader, dialogue, revise, modify, collaboration, originality, creative, big picture, academic integrity, relevance, fact check, remodel, grammar, polishing, structure.

This year the journal has shifted to an open submission deadline. This has, in part, been in preparation for an online only presence, but also has positive implications to support diverse writers and provide greater flexibility as we all navigate the twists and turns of life. Paired with our writing workshop for emerging writers in August 2025, facilitated expertly by Dr Carolyn Shaw, we hope this will encourage more writers to share their thoughts and experiences with our journal readers. As a result of our open submission policy, we have received a diverse range of manuscripts throughout the year. Some of these remain in their own liminal stages as we work through the editorial process.

Each contribution in this year's journal reflects rites of passage for the music therapists involved. The report on the 2022 survey of Registered Music Therapists may represent different stages in the lives of practitioners in New Zealand. For Hyunah, as a contributor to the survey article, I experienced my own personal rites of passage during the article's development - marriage, relocation to another country, and health challenges - all while collaborating with co-authors who faced their own stages of life. The community voices piece extends traditional forms of therapy by integrating technology, reflecting a crossing of thresholds into new possibilities. The first book review on Rickson's (2022) work can be seen as a testament to her lifelong dedication and experience in the field of music therapy for autistic children; a form of post-liminal reflection on her professional journey. The second book review on *The Handbook of Music Therapy* offers an intriguing perspective on how the reviewer connects the first and second editions to their own evolving journey as a music therapist.

As an editorial team, we strive to honour each person's unique passage, balancing individual diversity and academic convention, whilst supporting one another across thresholds. This year's process has been a profound exercise in valuing both the collective and the self; acknowledging that we are all, in different ways, crossing and re-crossing the liminal spaces of life.

## References

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