



Improvising Clinical Themes: Creating Form to Foster Self-Expression and Agency

(5 CMTE credits)

Saturday, October 4, 2025

Converse University, Spartanburg, SC

Begins promptly at 10:00 AM – plan to arrive no later than 9:30 AM to register and greet your friends. MTASC business meeting will be held during lunch.

Musical themes are the “playing field” for musical interaction in which clients are provided with opportunities to engage and express. Through the creation of themes that are built around the client's musical, behavioral, and/or emotional cues clients may experience empathy, predictability and feelings of safety that can enhance the relational music-making-dynamic experience. This course explores the intersection between the clinical and non-clinical music making process in terms of the music therapist crafting meaningful themes that serve as a foundation for providing clients with opportunities for engagement.

This course will provide participants with a practical guide to crafting musical themes with clinical intent. Topical areas include: 1) developing repeatable melodic themes with voice and guitar/piano accompaniment, 2) solidifying themes to construct musical form, such as A-B-A, 3) employing clinical techniques of empathy and elicitation within the musical process of crafting themes, and 4) navigating shifts between client-led and therapist-led initiatives to construct musical form such as A-B-A

Clinical video, demonstration, and experientially based learning will be used throughout the course to illustrate concepts and practice techniques.

Learner Objectives:

Upon completion of this CMTE, participants will be able to:

1. identify and apply at least 2 clinical improvisation techniques regarding empathy, redirection, and elicitation techniques using repetition and variation to develop musical themes in therapeutic contexts (CBMT III.5.a.g.o.r.y.bb).
2. demonstrate the ability to structure an “A” section based on client-led clinical techniques and in-the-moment reflexivity and to structure a “B” section based on therapist-led techniques and in-the-moment reflexivity (CBMT III.5.a.g.o.r.y.bb).
3. Demonstrate the ability to name musical qualities that differentiate between “A” and “B” sections in clinical improvisation, articulating when and how to transition from client-led to therapist-led approaches to support therapeutic goals (CBMT III.5.a.k.r.y.ee.hh).
4. design an A-B-A musical form that reflects intentional shifts between client-led and therapist-led initiatives, demonstrating techniques of elicitation and redirection to deepen the musical and therapeutic experience (CBMT III.5.a.g.o.r.y.bb).

There are no prerequisites to attend this CMTE event. Students are welcome and encouraged to come and learn with MT-BCs.

MT-BCs - REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR CBMT # FOR SIGNING IN AND OUT.

Bring your own guitar for active participation in this event if able. Some guitars and keyboards will be available at the course.

About the presenter:

John A. Carpente, Ph., MT-BC, NRMT, LCAT, DIRE-C is Professor of music therapy at Molloy University, Founder & Executive Director of the Rebecca Center for Music Therapy and founding director of the Center for Autism and Child Development at Molloy University. He is also the Founding music therapist and creator of the DIRFloortime-based music therapy clinical and training program at the Rebecca School in New York City where he participated in weekly supervision with Dr. Stanley Greenspan (creator of the DIR Model). Dr. Carpente has over 20 years of clinical and supervisory experience working in a variety of clinical settings serving children, adolescents, and adults with neurodevelopmental disorders. He received his Master of Arts degree at the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University where he also completed post-graduate advanced certification training Levels 1 & 2 in Nordoff-Robbins Creative Music Therapy. He completed his Ph.D. at Temple University where he received several research and clinical practice awards for innovation and contributions to the field of music therapy. He is the author of several journal articles, book chapters and the Individualized Music -Centered Assessment Profile for Neurodevelopmental Disorders (IMCPA-ND) and created the Developmental Relationship-based Music Therapy Model. Dr. Carpente lectures and conducts training worldwide.

CMTE Schedule:

Course Schedule

9:00-9:50 Registration

9:50-10:00 am

Check in

10:00 am -12:30 pm

Musical form

Setting it up: "Let's Sing a Song for Daniel"

Symmetry & syntax

Predicting & anticipating (why? A domain of health to assess in MT?)

Perceptual organization (why? A domain of health to assess in MT?)

Pattern recognition (why? important? A domain of health to assess in MT?)

Melodic Theme

Let's Sing!

Things to think about when crafting melodies

Non-Clinical vs. Clinical: Relationship between player & listener and MT & client

Importance of repetition & attention

Visiting the Musical Elements

- What are your musical tendencies?
- Flexing the musical elements and variations
- 1 & 2 Chord Jam
- I-vi-ii-V

Crafting your “A” section

- Creating “A” section
- Clinical intent of an “A” section
- Improvising your “A” section based on Client-led approach
- Committing to your music & theme while being reflexive and “in-the-moment”

12:30 pm – 2:00 pm

Lunch

2:00 pm – 4 pm

Clinical techniques and “A” Section

- Techniques of empathy (Bruscia, 1987) and client-led dynamic
- Importance of repetition for self-regulation, trust, safety & predictability
- “A” section creating the playing field and implementing techniques of empathy

Clinical techniques and “B” Section

- Elicitation and redirection techniques (Bruscia, 1987) and therapist led dynamic
- When to move into a “B” section?
- Providing opportunities to expand the musical experience
- Navigating shifts between client-led and therapist-led initiatives to construct musical form such as A-B-A

Working A and B sections: Creating A-B-A form

- Clinical techniques
- Musical variations in terms of range of elements

4:00-4:15 pm

- Wrap-up & Questions
- Course Evaluations

Registration:

Free to MTASC members, non-members, \$25 (pay with link in Google Registration form)
Should this CMTE be canceled, all registered participants will be notified, and any CMTE fees paid will be refunded. Reminder - annual dues (usually paid in fall) \$25 for professionals, \$15 for first year professionals, \$10 students).

Walk-in registration available but not lunch.

Registration: <https://forms.gle/SEyFxbAXpucXQHah6>

Questions? Contact to Carol.shultis@converse.edu. Call (864) 596-9621.

Lunch:

Order a box lunch from Converse Dining Services – delivered to our meeting area or bring your own lunch. We'll have tables and water available. Box lunch \$14 order by Wednesday, October 1. The box lunch includes a sandwich, chips, an apple and a drink.

Location:

Blackman Music Building is located on the back of Converse University campus on Drayton Avenue. The Belk Parking lot is nearby at the corner of Drayton & North Fairview Avenues. Park in the lot and come to the Music Building down the stairs at the edge of the Milliken Art Building and across the breezeway to enter Blackman lobby. The CMTE will be held in the lower level. Those with mobility issues can enter from the lower level but will need to make arrangements as the parking area is very small and someone will need to meet the individual at the locked door. Please indicate your need for this accommodation when registering.

Because of the participatory design of this course, we are not able to provide a recorded version of this CMTE.

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is approved by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) for 5 Continuing Music Therapy Education credits. The SER-AMTA #P-024, maintains responsibility for program quality and adherence to CBMT policies and criteria.