

**Caicedo, Patricia. *We Are What We Listen To: The Impact of Music on Individual and Social Health.***

Translated by Neha Iyer. New York: Mundo Arts Publications, 2021. Paper, vi, 167 pp., \$27.00. ISBN 9781733903547. [www.mundoarts.com](http://www.mundoarts.com)

For the title of her most recent book, soprano Patricia Caicedo revises the well known adage “we are what we eat” to reflect the important role of music in the human experience. Caicedo, a medical doctor, singer, and musicologist, illuminates the strong links between music and medicine, and how this connection affects the health of each person and society. Music is both an individual experience and a communal interaction that has strong symbolic meaning.

Caicedo begins with a whistle stop tour of the historical entwining of music and medicine. From earliest cultures, music was believed to have healing powers. The ancient Greeks considered it an important component of medicine, and the tenth century physician Ibn Sina wrote about the use of music as therapy. Modern medicine has continued to study the effects of music, particularly in the fields of neuroscience and cognition. The musician’s brain differs from the brain of a nonmusician; research reveals that musical studies can improve memory, attention, and cognitive skills. The author explains how humans process music at the cerebral level, and explores the connection between music and emotion.

Throughout the volume, Caicedo studies the effect of music from the inside out, identifying hormones, such as endorphin, serotone, and

dopamine, that are released while performing. She also looks at the effect of music on humans from the outside in. For instance, musical group activities (such as singing in a choir) release oxytocin, a neurotransmitter that researchers used to believe resulted only from physical contact. “Our relationship with music could be both active and passive” (31), writes Caicedo, but whether making or listening to music, complex processes occur in the brain. She lauds the work of musicologist Christopher Small, who advocated for adoption of the verb “musicking” as a term to encompass all roles in music making.

The author also investigates the cultural context of music. Music has meaning for each person and for the communities to which they belong, from the local to the global level. Caicedo examines this aspect from the perspective of the Covid pandemic. The pandemic has underscored that the actions of individuals have repercussions for the health of the community, and that the concept of public health must be perceived as global, not local, issue. Moreover, the paradigm for global health must recognize the social context and incorporate all aspects of culture, including the humanities and the arts. The final section is an exercise book that encourages readers to explore the music of their lives, and to create their own.

The volume is well researched, and the extensive list of works cited represents a wide range of disciplines. Caicedo writes in a direct and informal style, but does not allow the vernacular to undermine the gravitas of the topic. Regrettably, the translation from the original Spanish is occasionally clumsy, and there are some grammatical errors, momentary dis-

tractions in a volume that is thought provoking and recommended reading.

**Ficken, Ted. *Music of Hate, Music for Healing: Paired Stories from the Hate Music Industry and the Profession of Music Therapy.*** Eugene, OR: Luminare Press, 2020. Paper, 431 pp., \$16.95. ISBN 9781643883717. [www.luminarepress.com](http://www.luminarepress.com).

Ted Ficken is a Registered Music Therapist and Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality who holds a PhD in Public Health. After reading an article that detailed the uses of music to spread hate, he set out to study the phenomenon. Ficken delves into the topic from the perspective of a professional music therapist, framing it as a public health problem that requires attention.

The volume is comprised of paired stories about hate music and music therapy. By way of introduction, Ficken offers definitions of both. Although it was difficult to arrive at a singular, limiting definition of hate music, he found that certain characteristics were recurrent: direct and forceful expressions of hate that encourage violence, employ stereotypes and pejorative terms, and promote antisocial and criminal behavior. For music therapy, he proffers the definition from the website of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA): “Music Therapy is an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals.” The author augments the AMTA definition with a succinct “elevator speech” response that compares music therapy to music education. The lat-

ter uses music to reach musical goals, whereas the former uses music to reach nonmusical goals.

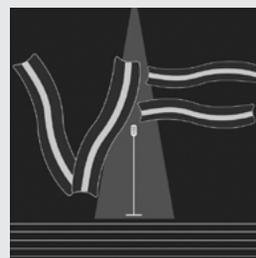
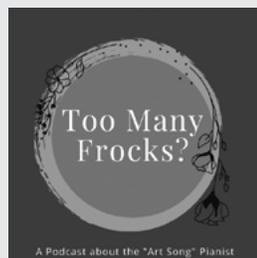
Ficken offers fourteen pairs of stories. Some of the stories of hate are plucked directly from contemporary news reports, such as the deadly Charlottesville rally in 2017, while others peer backward in time, such as the anti-immigrant songs that were popular in the United States in the early twentieth century. For the stories of music therapy, the author deliberately selected diverse individuals whose lives or music therapy practices have given them insight into hatred.

The volume is a multifaceted study of hatred and healing, and how music is used as a vehicle for both. The information about hate music is chilling. The number of hate groups in the United States has more than doubled over the past twenty years; not surprisingly, the number of hate crimes has risen as well. If Ficken had opted to write only about hate music, readers would have been left with a sense of hopelessness. However, the stories about music therapists are inspiring; the tales range from Felice Wolmut, who emigrated to the United States from Austria to escape Nazi persecution, to Daughters of Harriet, a vocal

quintet consisting of music therapists who conduct chant circles.

Hate music is not new, writes Ficken, and its prevention is possible only if its root causes and contributing factors are identified and addressed. To that end, he offers insight into the events and environments that foster hate crimes, and distinguishes specific actions to stop the spread of hate music. One of the most powerful tools, he states, is teaching and learning about other cultures. This book serves as an important reminder to all pedagogues that teaching has impacts far beyond the subject at hand.

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