



BY MARTHA SUMMA-CHADWICK, DMA

Music is essential to human experience, but most people are generally unaware of recent advances in science-based music therapy practices. To help disseminate this knowledge, the Chattanooga-based nonprofit organization Music Therapy Gateway in Communications (MTGIC) created an annual concert series beginning in 2013 that, while it entertains, has educated its audiences regarding the positive therapeutic outcomes of music.

Previous concerts featured works by composers who overcame neural challenges, as well as upbeat contemporary music to help the audience experience how easily and subconsciously their muscles move to rhythm. These yearly events have been designed to bridge the perceived gap between the aesthetic and therapeutic benefits of music, and to advocate for the remarkable potential that music protocols could produce in mainstream medicine.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's concert event was available entirely in a virtual format. The Power of Music concert, supported by a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission, premiered on June 1, 2021, on the YouTube platform. The full concert remained available for viewing for an additional 30 days following the premiere. Additional components of the Power of Music event included a pre-concert symposium featuring a stellar panel of

experts discussing various elements of music in science and education, and spoken tributes discussing the importance of music to the individual and the community. The event website, www.powerofmusicconcert.com, remains active and contains links to concert highlights, preconcert webinar, and spoken tributes, as well as program notes, participant bios and pictures, and a general overview of the power of music when utilized aesthetically and therapeutically. As of July 1, 2021, audiences can still access the violin/piano selections, the pre-concert webinar, and the spoken tributes from the website; these videos will remain online indefinitely, with links remaining accessible from the event website.

MTGIC partnered with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) Department of Performing Arts for this event; UTC graciously donated their facilities and recording team for all video segments. The concert performance, which was recorded live at Cadek Hall on the UTC campus in early April 2021, featured Richard Cox, tenor; Mark Reneau, violin; and Dr. Martha Summa-Chadwick, pianist and MTGIC Executive Director. Program selections represented many different genres and styles,¹ reflecting the diversity of music that provided comfort to people during the pandemic. Included were comedic and sentimental songs by American songwriter Stephen Foster and beautifully stylized art songs for voice and piano by Richard Strauss. Maurice Ravel was inspired by American jazz; the second movement of his violin sonata shows a strong blues influence in the unique compositional development of this work. Operatic selections were also represented, as well as movements from Manuel de Falla's *Suite Populaire Espagnole*, arranged for violin and piano. The concert concluded with a delightful array of Tin-

1. Due to licensing inconsistencies for virtual performances, all music selected for programming in this concert is available in the public domain.



POWER PLAY: Concert performers included (left to right) Martha Summa-Chadwick, piano, Richard Cox, tenor, Mark Reneau, violin.

Pan Alley songs representing Broadway, stage, and screen. These charming pieces demonstrated how music influences muscle movement by encouraging the audience to notice how they automatically tap a finger or toe to keep time with the music.

The expert panel participating in the pre-concert educational webinar represented the professions of health care, music, and education. Panel members were Dr. Stuart Benkert, Department Head of UTC's Department of Performing Arts; Bob Bernhardt, Music Director Emeritus and Principal Pops Conductor of the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera; Dr. Rick Rader, Director of the Morton J. Kent Habilitation Center at Chattanooga's Orange Grove Center and Editor in Chief of *EP Magazine*; and Dr. Martha Summa-Chadwick, MTGIC Executive Director. The group discussion incorporated in-depth dialogue regarding the power of music from a range of diverse viewpoints, with conversation regarding science, therapy, education, enrichment, inclusion and community. Additional videos featuring former Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, and Stratton Tingle, Executive Director of Chattanooga's

SoundCorps organization, were also included to pay tribute to the power of music for the individual and in the community by demonstrating the impact of music on society.

Research studies suggest that a large majority of people have reached out to music as a primary source for comfort and entertainment during the worldwide pandemic. Music is a vital universal language that enhances emotional experiences, communication, and physical movement. In addition to the well-known aesthetic benefits of music, science confirms that it is a direct channel to the brain. The use of music protocols in medicine could significantly benefit people with motor, speech, and cognition challenges resulting from such conditions as autism, stroke, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, and many other diagnoses. A remarkable body of excellent research verifying the benefits of music therapy is available in scientific journals, but this knowledge is generally unknown to most people, who typically attend a concert for the pure joy of listening to the music. The Power of Music event sought to present an overview of the potential of music in therapy, while also providing a delightful musical experience for the audience. •

MUSIC TO OUR EARS : ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information regarding the Power of Music concert event, additional information about the performers and speakers, or a more in-depth view of the benefits of biomedical music protocols, please visit the following websites:

POWER OF MUSIC
www.powerofmusicconcert.com

MTGIC
www.mtgic.org

SOUNDCORPS OF CHATTANOOGA
www.soundcorps.org

RICHARD COX
www.richardcoxtenor.com

MARTHA SUMMA-CHADWICK
www.marthasumma.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Martha Summa-Chadwick has achieved a national reputation as an educator, presenter, performer, and advocate for the cause of music in therapy. She has performed as piano and harpsichord soloist with orchestras across the country and served for twenty-six years on the faculty of the Cadek Conservatory of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Tennessee. For the past decade, Dr. Summa-Chadwick has explored various ways to use music for therapeutic as well as aesthetic ends. She is the Executive Director of the nonprofit organization Music Therapy Gateway in Communications, Inc., and a frequent guest speaker at both national and regional conferences, discussing the use of biomedical music techniques for challenged children. She has given two TED talks, and is also exploring how biomedical music protocols could be automated into software applications for persons with motor, speech, or cognition challenges.