Chapter 1
Music, the Arts, and Healing

Rodney Luther Whittenberg
Melodyvision, USA

ABSTRACT
The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the ability to create opportunities to use the arts to heal. The author has included three narratives, both his personal story as a professional artist, a non-clinical practitioner, and those of his students. These narratives illustrate the effect of the arts on individuals dealing with trauma and poverty. Time and time again, as indicated in these narratives, the arts can be called on to provide respite and relief from fear, anxiety, and hurting. The arts are a touchstone that can be revisited throughout a lifespan regardless of age or stage or even circumstance.

INTRODUCTION
The bow lands on a string, the reed vibrates with a push of air, the stick hits the drum and the snares rattle against the bottom head, the needle lands on the record, the mp3 player translates digital bits of zeros and ones to an analogue signal and the space is filled with these sounds...

These sounds. How can sounds created over fifty years ago have the power to transform me? These sounds created in another part of the world. I can now sit in my car or living room or on a train and play back these sounds. These sounds go to the very core of the very essence, the soul. I am transported and transformed, and my body moves uncontrollably. I begin to cry or laugh or both at the same time and I have no power over it. It is as if I am under a spell. In these sounds and in these moments, everything about this experience is as real as anything I have ever experienced or ever will experience.

When these sounds end, I am not the same. I am forever changed. I have communed with something more powerful, more connected, more alive, and more whole. And that is not even the most salient, most true, or most amazing part of the experience of these sounds. What must the act of creating and performing these sounds do to the creator of this work? What must they be going through to create this work? To what depth did they go to find some kind of truth? What layers did they peel away? What did they heal?
Music, the Arts, and Healing

Did Pete Townsend transform the alienation and devastation of his childhood growing up in post WW2 England by composing the rock opera *Tommy*? I believe he did for millions of his fans. Did Roger Waters transform his isolation by composing *The Wall*? I believe he did for his fans. Did Chuck D transform his anger at oppression and racism with “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back?” I believe he did for his fans. This is real power. Music has power. Art has power; the power to move, the power to transform, and the power to heal.

MY STORY

My mom told me that as a young baby I would crawl into the kitchen and pull the pots and pans out of the cupboard. I would sit in the middle of the floor and bang on the pots and pans and make up songs. I could sit there for hours. I also had an imaginary friend named Gutty. Gutty and I had many adventures together: safaris in Africa, climbing to the top of Mt Everest, and high tea with the Queen of England to name a few. It was my dad who introduced me to the creativity that already existed within me. He was always making up stories and trying to get us to laugh. He was always trying to improve what already existed.

It was dad who opened me up to music and movies. My dad’s business was in retail sales. He was the first African American to sell refrigerators and air conditioners at Sears and Roebucks in West Philadelphia in the late 1950’s, early 1960’s. He grew up very poor, living in the developmental period of his life during the great depression. He found solace in movies and salvation in music, but knew he had to get himself out of poverty. The arts and entertainment would be something he could enjoy and use as an escape while he focused on working hard at a good job and achieving the American dream. He never stopped going to the movies and listening to music. What was a significant part of his single life merged right into his family life.

By the time I came along he not only worked for Sears, but he would purchase run down houses. On his days off, Dad would say to me, “Hey Rod, you want to go play build-a-house?” I was quick to respond, “Yea!” Upon arrival, however, I quickly realized that this was not play time. The houses were always run down with holes in the floors, no refrigerator, sink or stove, and crawling with bugs and rodents.

It was great, though. I learned how to wire outlets and weld pipes, put up paneling and install drop ceilings. The big takeaway was the lesson that if you imagined something, if you saw something in your mind, and then worked really, really hard, the vision could become real. Within a year my dad had rented the house out to a family. That run down, broken down house had become a home. Dad had taught me about the power of creativity.

When I was about seven, my dad came home from work and let my mom, sister, and I know that he had written a song. Of course, my mom was like, “Here we go”, and I thought, “Wow! My dad wrote a song, yea!” My dad, had no musical training, but he was determined to send the song to legendary country singer Charley Pride. Since he needed someone to create the sheet music for his song, he looked in the phone book and found a composer and arranger, and he made an appointment.

I remember that it was a beautiful Sunday afternoon when my dad and I piled into the car for the drive into Center City. When we got to the house of the arranger, I had no idea my whole life was going to change. The door opened and I could not believe my eyes. There were musical instruments everywhere. We went up a spiral staircase to find a room with a big tape machine and long mixing board. The arranger asked my dad to sing his song into the microphone. Once my dad had sung his song, the guy asked me