

Capilano College 1st in Music Therapy

Probably the biggest problem for instructors in the music therapy program at Capilano College is describing exactly what they do. It's easy to demonstrate, but to put down on paper the experience of a music therapy session is something akin to trying to describe a symphony to someone who's never heard one.

The best way to tell about the music therapy program, then, is to relate the experiences of some of the people the music therapists have worked with.

Mr. P — chattered incessantly and incoherently while walking up and down in an agitated way. At 78, he had been hospitalized for three years. In music therapy he began to play the drum and would play non-stop very loudly for 20 minutes after the sessions. Mr. P soon began to talk coherently in short phrases, to calm down and to walk slowly.

Mr. J — had not talked for 30 years when he came to his first music therapy session. He sat at the back and joined in the first song! Slowly, he began to talk again, adding more and more words to his vocabulary.

John D — was an autistic seven-year-old. His world consists of objects, not people. When he heard a certain classical piece of music, however, he would allow himself to dance with the therapist. Each week he made more and more contact with other people, so long as the session began with "his" music.

These are just three of the reasons why the music therapy program is becoming widely recognized by hospitals and other institutions in British Columbia. Music therapy is a well-established field in Europe, but it is new in Canada. The program at Capilano College, which started in 1975, is the only one of its kind in the country and has been breaking a lot of ground.

learn a great deal about themselves.

Music therapy coordinator, Kerry Burke, has watched many students go through the program and find themselves at first very upset and emotional as they face their clients and the institutions they live in.

Music therapists now work mostly with the elderly and with special needs children. There are two music therapy departments — at Sunnyhill (Children's) Hospital and at Valleyview (Senior's) Hospital. With both groups music therapy has been shown to reach those clients with emotional and communication difficulties faster than other therapies.

Capilano College students are now employed in hospitals, such as Valleyview, Sunnyhill, UBC Extended Care and Riverview, group homes and other facilities

such as the North Shore Association for Physically Handicapped, daycare programs and Vancouver Family Services.

Of course, there are a few problems. Students in the music therapy program come from all across Canada, but after studying for two years in B.C. they generally get to like it so much they don't want to leave. That means that B.C. is fast becoming the music therapy mecca of Canada — of the approximately 60 music therapists in the country, 30 work in Vancouver.

Students, educators and others who are interested in learning more about the music therapy program can write to Capilano College, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, B.C., V7J 3H5, or call the department at 986-1911, local 287.

Students in music therapy are trained in clinical practice, the disabilities of children and adults that respond to music, assessment and evaluation procedures, and professional conduct and responsibility. As well as theory, such courses as interpersonal relations, group dynamics, music improvisation, dance therapy and music therapy practicum are largely experiential and require the students to learn through practice.

Each week the students attend a clinic, hospital, school or boarding home for at least six hours, where they are expected to run therapy sessions with different age groups. As well as learning about others, however, these students