

Working Together for Music Therapy: An Interview with Clifford Madsen

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This interview with **Clifford Madsen** is the first in a series designed to showcase the contributions of some of the many people who are working behind the scenes and in front of the scenes to support music therapy and to support the AMTA in its work to support music therapy. It has been an honor to spend some time with them as they share their thoughts on what the AMTA means to them.

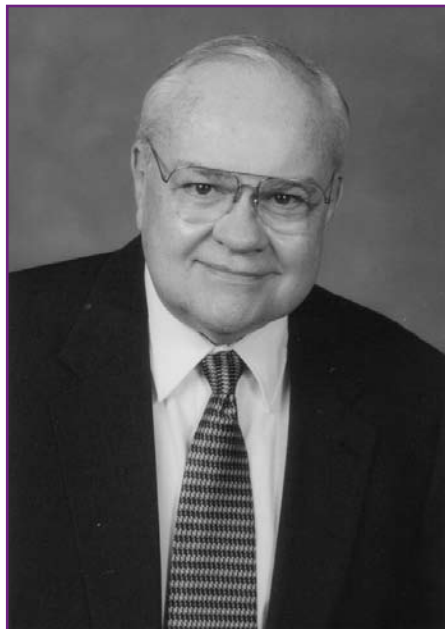
In the interview which follows, Cliff Madsen takes us back to a time when our organization was of such a small size that the entire membership could meet in a single room. At that time, it may have been easier to see the importance of each individual's contribution; however, it is no less true today that collectively we are the AMTA. While the more visible face of the AMTA may be presented by the President, the other Board members, the CEO, and the national office staff, the work accomplished and the success achieved is only possible through the contributions of each of us individual members—the American Music Therapy Association is us.

In exploring Clifford Madsen's reflections, you may find yourself, as I did, with cause to pause and reflect on your own life's journey in music therapy. Your thoughts may also turn to where the future will take you on the journey as an advocate for music therapy.

Curtis: *You have been a long-time supporter of the AMTA. Could you tell me a little bit about what the AMTA means to you?*

Madsen: "The AMTA for me is the organization that embodies all of the best of music therapy practices, procedures, research, and everything else. And I got involved way back when we were then the National Association for Music Therapy and the most important part of what we do is to have provided over the years a solid research base for practices, procedures, protocols, whatever. There are a lot of professional organizations, but the longevity of our own [is remarkable] (especially with the merger of NAMT & AAMT, and with now one unified organization). I think we have the very strongest organization that we could have actually just staking a claim for what it

is that music therapy is, what it does, what it is not, what it does not do, and I think that is very, very important. Without a professional organization, organizations just don't have very much clout. Organizations need a solid body of committed people; they need to have appropriate publications that continue forever, and they need to keep abreast of what's going on as far as latest developments are concerned. All of this by way of saying that the national organization is very, very important to the field and to individuals,



not even to mention the countless numbers of people in the past, now, and in the future who benefit from music therapy services."

Curtis: *What kind of ways have you been supporting the AMTA yourself? What got you started and why do you continue?*

Madsen: "I got started as you might know a long, long time ago and since most of what I do besides teaching is research, I was interested in the research part of music therapy and have been active at the national level for over 50 years. As a matter of fact last year, Ronna [Kaplan] gave me an award for 50 years of continuous contributions to music therapy."

Curtis: *Congratulations! That was wonderful.*

Madsen: "I've been a forever chair of the Research Committee. But years and years ago, I was actually on the executive board and that was when the whole organization was so small that when we had our national meetings everybody in the organization met in one room together and we didn't have split out sessions or anything else. And of course at that time there were still some important things that were happening and things that needed to be done. And I was just always interested in doing everything I could to make all of that as good as it could possibly be."

Curtis: *And do you also contribute with donations of money as well as of time?*

Madsen: "Oh yes, I've been doing that more and more and more as I became a rich guy, you know. I think most careers are probably about the same as mine. You know you start out and it's hard to even make ends meet, especially if you have family and other commitments. But as one gets older, one's salary usually increases and you just have more opportunities to give. And I think that is really important. I think that getting a substantial salary for doing things for anybody carries a responsibility of giving back to the people, the organizations, whatever, that supported you personally and continues to support others. I think it's something that everybody should do and they should do it in direct proportion to how much they can."

Curtis: *The next question you may have already answered, but I will go ahead ask it just to be sure. Why do you think it is important for others to support the AMTA?*

Madsen: "I think it is important for the individual on a personal basis because, you know, the coin of the realm is money. If people part with their money, they should be giving to something they believe in and they should know that that money is going to be put to good use. And I have always been very, very comfortable with the openness, the open audits that our organization has had over the years and you know it is important to know that the money is going to go into a good place and it is going to be used for things that will expand and support the organization and

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of course the organization is all the individual members as well as the people with whom they interact as therapists. So that I guess is a long way of saying that if you can, you should; and I think it is an obligation that everybody has and I feel it's right."

Curtis: *So you believe in the AMTA and you believe you should give to what you believe in?*

Madsen: "Exactly."

Curtis: *And the last is, do you have any other thoughts you would like to share with others?*

Madsen: "No. Except that, and I've mentioned this before, but professionally people gain a lot from their professional organization especially in academia. They gain a lot not just because of the national visibility and support, but a lot of people's careers in music therapy have benefitted greatly from their association with music therapy – something that actually helps them in their main job, whatever that is. And that

is really important. I think that it's incumbent on all of us that when we get to the point that we should be giving back something, we give back and not move on to something else."

Curtis: *Yes and a lot of people think they pay their membership dues and that should suffice.*

Madsen: "Right and they don't understand that they are the beneficiaries of people who have come before them and subsidized them tremendously with a lot of sweat equity as well as all of the things that keeps organizations going."

Curtis: *Absolutely. Well that's it for the interview. I really appreciate you sharing your time and more importantly your thoughts.*

Madsen: "Well, thank you Sandi. You know years ago Brian Wilson was asking me why did I [give]. Well, I said I don't know, I just think it's the right thing to do. But it has been something that is important and it cannot be over emphasized."

In reflecting on Cliff Madsen's words, a few common threads stand out: We have made the AMTA what it is today and together we have very successfully advocated for music therapy. Together we still have an important advocacy role to play in the future. But to be successful, it comes down to this: If we can give, we should; we should give in keeping with our own situation. It can be a gift of time, money, expertise, or something else still to be imagined. I will take Cliff Madsen's words and example with me as I continue on my journey in music therapy. And I would add: If you see a task that needs to be accomplished, if you see room for improvement, or if you have bright ideas that you would like to see enacted, roll up your sleeves and join me and other AMTA members in making it happen.

We are the AMTA. ❖