



Special issue
**Music therapy in Europe:
 Paths of professional development**

in partnership with the
 European Music Therapy Confederation



SWEDEN

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

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HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The pioneering period

The first information and discussion about music therapy in Sweden is to be found in journals from 1944 regarding a pioneer named Aleks Pontvik. His publications in German about “the healing effect of classical music” inspired by Carl G. Jung and Rudolf Steiner among others, influenced the beginning of music therapy in Sweden. This lasted until 1974 when Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins made their first visit to Sweden and a more systematic development then started. The courses of Nordoff and Robbins inspired music teachers and special educators to integrate their way of working with children in schools for people with special needs. A Swedish association for music therapy (SFM) was organised with the main purpose of initiating a professional training on an academic level. Many seminars and workshops were presented by the board members of the association: Brittmarie Adolfson, Anci Sandell, Werner Wolf Glaser and Lasse Hjelm.

Period of education and professionalisation

In 1981 the first music therapy course started at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm (KMH) with important contributions from Kurt Lindgren, lecturer in improvisation at the college, and Bertil Sundin, psychologist and researcher. These music therapy pioneers were employed at the faculty, working together with guest lecturers from Norway: Even Ruud, Unni Johns and Tom Naess.

During this time music therapy was successfully implemented within the field of special education. Between 1985 and 1990 a growing interest in music therapy could be observed in child and adult psychiatry, neurological rehabilitation, geriatrics, cancer care and also as a form of psychosocial support in schools. A comprehensive training was required and in 1990 a music therapy programme based on humanistic and psychodynamic principles (while still maintaining broad methodological perspectives) was developed. New appointments at the faculty included Margareta Wårja (1990-1993), Urban Yman (1990-2000) and Ingrid Hammarlund. In 1994 the first senior lecturer position in music therapy was officially announced when Ingrid Hammarlund was appointed senior lecturer and director of training (1994-2012). Ann-Sofie Paulander held a position as lecturer (2004-2013). Since 2013 Anci Sandell has taken the role of senior lecturer. An important step, too, was the start of regular supervision training courses; the first being introduced in 1997, a second in 2001 and a third in 2015.

Parallel to developments on an academic level, other directions appeared in the field of music therapy. In 1985 a basic course in music therapy within the non-formal educational system for adults started at Sjövik folk high school. The private ‘Musikterapiinstituet’ was founded in 1987 in Uppsala with training in Functional Music Therapy (FMT), a method developed by Lasse Hjelm. A programme in FMT on a graduate level began in 1988 at Ingesund University College of Music. A Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) training course was also run by the private institute ‘Expressive Arts’.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

Recognition and state regulation of music therapy in Sweden requires an academic programme at Master’s level, training programmes for supervisors as well as research programmes and publications. The training programme at KMH has been continuously adapted to follow these requirements, but since music therapy has not been considered a main academic area, the programme has remained under the umbrella of the music pedagogy institution. In 2002 a complementary course at Master’s level was introduced at KMH and since 2007 the training has consisted of a one-year course in music and health followed by a two-year Master’s programme in music therapy as a specialisation within music pedagogy. These changes opened the possibility for music therapists to apply for doctoral studies – an important step in the recognition process. Since 2011 four music therapy dissertations have been published.

The most recent achievement (October 2014) is that music therapy has been officially approved by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), as a main area within the Swedish academic system. This recognition of the high scientific level of the programme may strengthen the case for music therapy to have its

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own Master's programme (instead of a specialisation within music pedagogy), a research programme and a professorship.

Important steps for the future

A successful result of international research is that since 2011 music therapy has featured in the guidelines of the National Board of Health and Welfare as a recommended treatment for schizophrenia. In 2013 music therapy was added in the recommendations for palliative care and today music therapy is also visible in the healthcare system classification code.

This recognition of courses has raised the question of who can provide music therapy. It also indicates the need for a stronger protection of the title 'music therapist'. Some efforts to achieve a legitimisation similar to those of other health professions have been made over the years. The last attempt was made in 2012 when one of the professional organisations for music therapists, Sweden's academic music therapists (SAM), delivered a letter to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs expressing a request for a protected title. This coincided with a government investigation about protected professions and alternative and complementary healthcare. In the letter SAM stated that music therapy could not, and should not, be seen as alternative or complementary care, but a profession with a scientific ground that in many cases cannot be replaced by other treatments.

No decisions or laws were made concerning music therapy, and there is debate as to whether this will ever be achievable, or if a more realistic goal would be a registration managed by a trade union. In the meantime a register administered by SAM is under construction.

The approval from UKÄ makes it an exciting and interesting time for music therapy in Sweden. Collaboration with a university has been asked for and could be facilitated under these new conditions.

Although music therapy remains a small profession regarding the number of people working, the ambition and eagerness to develop knowledge in the field is high. The fact that 11 of the 130 music therapists trained at KMH are, or have been, conducting doctoral studies constitutes convincing evidence to prove that.

SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ EMTC country information:
<http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/sweden/>
- ❑ Förbundet musikterapi i Sverige (FMS):
www.musikterapi.se
- ❑ Royal College of Music (KMH):
www.kmh.se
- ❑ Sveriges akademiska musikterapeuter (SAM):
www.musikterapeut.se

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- Pontvik, A. (1962). *Der tönende Mensch*. Zürich: Rascher.
- Sandell, A. (2013). *Musik för kropp och själ Modell för Interaktiv Musikterapi* [Music for body and soul model for interactive music]. PhD Thesis, Nordic School of Public Health NHV.