



Special issue

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

in partnership with the  
European Music Therapy Confederation



## SWITZERLAND

### Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

Bettina Kandé-Staehelin<sup>1</sup>

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Music therapy in Switzerland is still a young but thriving profession. During the last 30 years many new work opportunities for music therapists have been created. Nevertheless, music therapists who qualify from training courses frequently have to find innovative and creative ways to begin work, as jobs are still rare.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century important precursors of modern music therapy were active in Switzerland and had an important international influence on reforms in music education, leading towards modern music therapy.

In 1913, the German founder of the anthroposophical movement, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), started the construction of the still existing centre of anthroposophy *Goetheanum* in Basel. Steiner's philosophy strongly influenced the development of modern music education and music therapy. In Geneva, Emile Jacques Dalcroze (1865-1950), founder of eurythmics, set a then completely new accent in music education by focusing on the experience of music through physical awareness, movement and kinaesthetics. His influence on modern music education reached far beyond the country's borders. In Zurich, one of his students, Mimi Scheiblauber (1891-1968), applied and further developed his methods in the field of music education with handicapped children. Her work can be seen as first steps toward today's understanding of music therapy.

Last but not least, many German and Austrian pioneers of the *Reformpädagogik* – many artists and intellectuals in general – found shelter in Switzerland during World War II and continued to develop their work and research during this difficult epoch.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Swiss musicians and/or psychotherapists interested in music therapy started to train and work as music therapy pioneers. As yet no training course was established in Switzerland. Some

people went abroad to obtain a degree, others trained on an autodidactic level. Thus, autodidactic pioneers such as Urs Voerkel, Fritz Hegi, Maja Rüdüsüli Voerkel, Johanna Spalinger, Madeleine Müller, Marie Thérèse Comte as well as music therapists trained in Vienna such as Verena Keller, Randi Coray, Isabelle Mangold Balmer and Sandra Lutz Hochreutener played an important role in the establishment process of modern music therapy in Switzerland. At the beginning of the 1980s their engagement finally led to the foundation of the first Swiss training courses (one in French and one in German) as well as to the bilingual Swiss Music Therapy Association.

#### RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL

State recognition of music therapy as a registered health profession is not yet achieved in Switzerland. However, music therapy has gained broader recognition over the past 30 years. At the present time, only one of the four training courses leads to a title recognised on a federal level (see below).

#### IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

In 1981 the national bilingual Swiss Music Therapy Association (SFMT/ASMT Schweizerischer Fachverband für Musiktherapie / Association Suisse de Musicothérapie) was founded. Today it counts approximately 192 fully accredited members and 48 associated members (not entirely fulfilling membership criteria) and seven patrons (supporters). SFMT/ASMT safeguards the interests of its members and can act as their representative with government authorities, health insurances and institutions in cases of conflict. It organises a national, bilingual continuing professional development event once a year.

Since 1980 five private training programmes have been founded. In 2003 one of them became a government-supported programme on a university level at Zurich University of the Arts; the title offered (MAS Klinische Musiktherapie ZFH) has been recognised and protected on a federal level since 2006.

Since 2006 Zurich University of the Arts offers a five-year part time postgraduate music therapy training for medical doctors and psychologists (MA level) leading to the qualification as 'music-psychotherapist' ('Musik-Psychotherapeut')<sup>2</sup>. This qualification is recognised by the Swiss Charter of Psychotherapy (Schweizer Charta für Psychotherapie) as an independent qualification in psychotherapy and is mentioned in the new law on psychological professions (Psychologieberufe-Gesetz), valid since January 2013 ([www.psychotherapiecharta.ch/charta](http://www.psychotherapiecharta.ch/charta)).

Also, since 2011 music therapists can pass an exam to obtain a title as "art therapist, specialised in music

<sup>1</sup> Music therapist MAS SFMT; Swiss country delegate to the European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC).

Email: [musictherapy@emtc.ch](mailto:musictherapy@emtc.ch)

<sup>2</sup> Only music therapists who are also trained psychologists or medical doctors can obtain this title.

therapy". However, this title does not correspond to EMTC standards (university level), but is recognised on a federal level (see [www.kskv-casat.ch/](http://www.kskv-casat.ch/)).

### Training situation

It was not until the 1980s that the first private training course was founded in Switzerland. Today, there are five postgraduate training programmes; four in German, one in French.

All trainings last four years and are on a part-time basis. Depending on the programme, candidates have to have previous professional qualifications (BA level or higher) in a related domain (i.e. music, medicine, psychology, education or nursing). Furthermore, experience in personal psychotherapy and/or music therapy as well as music and improvisation skills are requirements for admission. All five programmes demand an important financial contribution from the student. For these reasons, some candidates choose to go abroad, thus getting their training at a younger age and avoiding high expenses.

Only one Swiss training programme (Zurich University of the Arts) is situated at university level leading to a Master of Advanced Studies in Clinical Music Therapy. The programme corresponds to the international European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC) training standards. The title obtained (MAS ZFH in Klinischer Musiktherapie) is a protected title on a federal level. The four other training programmes operate on a private basis and lead to private diplomas. However, the Zurich University of the Arts offers an upgrade programme leading to the Master of Advanced Studies for music therapists with BA (or equivalent) music therapy diplomas on a private basis. During the last few years, this upgrade programme has not only attracted experienced Swiss music therapists, but also colleagues from neighbouring countries searching for a higher qualification.

Today, there is no doctoral programme in music therapy in Switzerland.

### SELECTED LINKS

- EMTC country information:  
<http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/switzerland/>
- Swiss Association for Music Therapy (SFMT/ASMT):  
[www.musictherapy.ch](http://www.musictherapy.ch)
- Training programmes:  
<http://emtc-eu.com/courses/switzerland/>

### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Deuter, M. (2010). *Polaritätsverhältnisse in der Improvisation. Systematik einer musikalisch-psychologischen Benennung der musiktherapeutischen Improvisation*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Esslinger, M., Kaufmann, J., Leitgeb, M., & Nussberger, R. (2014). *Gespürt - gehört - gebor(g)en. Musiktherapie mit risikoschwangeren Frauen, Säuglingen und Kleinkindern*.

- Zürcher Schriften zur Musiktherapie, Bd. 3. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Fausch-Pfister, H. (2012). *Music Therapy and Psychodrama: The Benefits of Integrating the Two Methods*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Gindl, B. (2002). *Anklang. Die Resonanz der Seele*. Paderborn: Junfermann.
- Hegi, F. (1998). *Übergänge zwischen Sprache und Musik: Die Wirkungskomponenten der Musiktherapie*. Paderborn: Junfermann.
- Hegi, F. (2010). *Improvisation und Musiktherapie. Möglichkeiten und Wirkungen von freier Musik*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Hegi, F., & Rüdüsüli, M. (2011). *Der Wirkung von Musik auf der Spur: Theorie und Erforschung der Komponenten*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Hegi, F., Lutz Hochreutener, S., & Rüdüsüli, M. (2006). *Musiktherapie als Wissenschaft. Grundlagen, Praxis, Forschung und Ausbildung*. Zürich: Eigenverlag.
- Hochreutener, S. L. (2009). *Spiel – Musik – Therapie. Methoden der Musiktherapie mit Kindern und Jugendlichen*. Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Kaufmann, J., Nussberger, R., Esslinger, M., & Leitgeb, M. M. (2014). *Gespürt – gehört – gebor(g)en. Musiktherapie mit risikoschwangeren Frauen, Säuglingen und Kleinkindern*. Zürcher Schriften zur Musiktherapie Bd. 3. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Lorz-Zitzmann, A., & Kandé-Staehelin, B. (2012). *Krankheit - Trauer – Wandlung: Musiktherapie mit schwer kranken Kindern, Jugendlichen und ihren Eltern*. Zürcher Schriften zur Musiktherapie Bd. 2. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Maurer-Joss, S. (2011). *Dem Leben eine Stimme geben. Zur Bedeutung der Stimme in der Musiktherapie mit behinderten und krebserkrankten Kindern*. Zürcher Schriften zur Musiktherapie Bd. 1. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Munro, S. (1986). *Musiktherapie bei Sterbenden*. Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer.
- Renz, M. (1996). *Zwischen Urangst und Urvertrauen. Therapie früher Störungen über Musik-Symbol- und spirituelle Erfahrungen*. Paderborn: Junfermann.
- Renz, M. (2000). *Zeugnisse Sterbender: Todesnähe als Wandlung und letzte Reifung*. Paderborn: Junfermann.
- Sutter, R. (2014). *Evidenzbasierte Musiktherapie bei Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD). Wirkung und klinische Anwendung von aktiven und rezeptiven Vorgehensweisen*. Kusterdingen: Urban & Fischer.
- Thalmann-Hereth, K. (2009). *Hochbegabung und Musikalität. Integrativ-musiktherapeutische Ansätze zur Förderung hochbegabter Kinder*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.