



Conference Report

XIII World Congress of Music Therapy *‘Music Therapy in Eastern and Western Philosophy’*

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XIII World Congress of Music Therapy *‘Music Therapy in Eastern and Western Philosophy’*

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World Federation of Music Therapy, Seoul, South Korea



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The 13th World Congress of Music Therapy took place in Seoul, South Korea between the 5th and the 9th of July 2011. It was jointly organised by the Korean Music Therapy Association and the Sookmyung Women’s University of Seoul and presented by the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT). As its topic suggests (‘Music Therapy in Eastern and Western Philosophy’), the conference paid special attention to similarities and differences in music therapy between East and West. Approximately 1350 delegates from 46 different countries gathered at the impressive venues of the Sookmyung Women’s University, in a modern and vibrant city that also honours its ancient roots.

Participants

According to the Chair of the Scientific Committee Youngshin Kim, the call for papers of the congress

attracted an astonishing number of 339 submissions on a wide range of topics. The 2011 WFMT committee accepted 124 research papers, 32 workshops, 8 roundtables, 5 clinical forums and 48 posters for this conference.



Picture 1: The main venue of the Congress

Most of the participants came from South Korea or neighbouring countries, such as Japan, China and Hong-Kong. The official language of the conference was English, however a simultaneous translation in Korean, Japanese and Chinese was offered during the Spotlight Sessions.

Pre-congress seminars

A number of inspiring seminars took place before the official opening of the congress on Tuesday the 5th of July. The seminars focused on the following research topics:

- *Music Therapy with Neurological Populations: Current Developments and Recommendations for Practice and Research* (main speaker: Dr Wendy Magee, UK)
- *Music Therapy and Oncology: International and Research Perspectives in Care across the Lifespan* (main speaker: Dr Lucanne Magill, Canada)
- *Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy: Creativity in the Service of Determining and Facilitating Clinical Goals in Music Therapy* (main speaker: Dr Alan Turry, USA)
- *From Research to Practice and Vice Versa: Evaluating Music Therapy Practice* (organised by the WFMT Assembly of Student Delegates)

Programme

Each conference day began with four spotlight presentations (two-hour session); these presentations were given by a total of sixteen renowned music therapists from different generations and regions of the world.

The topic of the first day was *‘Music Therapy and Medicine’*, where Dr C. Tomaino (USA), Dr G. Tucek (Austria), Dr W. Magee (UK) and Dr J. Lee (Korea) focused on, amongst others, music therapy in neuropalliative rehabilitation. One of the most interesting moments of this presentation was when Dr Tomaino explained how music could be used to enhance and stimulate attention and memory function in people with neurodegenerative diseases. Emphasis was put on how scientific research and clinical observations can inform each other for the use of music as a mnemonic aid and cognitive tool for people affected by Alzheimer’s disease.

The theme of the second spotlight presentation was *‘Music and Special Education’*. Dr A. Turry (USA), Dr Y. Kim (Korea), Dr D. Register (USA/Thailand), and Dr C. Threlfall (Australia) examined the potential of music therapists to enable lasting change in special education by working at a

whole school level. Dr Turry’s speech, in particular, focused on incorporating contemporary musical styles into the resources of Nordoff-Robbins (aka *Creative*) music therapy. He described how Nordoff-Robbins music therapy is practised all over the world with a variety of clinical populations, and presented the current research being done at a school for children with developmental disabilities.

Four experts from Japan, the USA, Spain and Denmark (H. Fujimoto, Dr A. Lipe, Dr M. Brotons, and Dr H. Ridder respectively) presented the section on *‘Music Therapy and Older Adults’*. Dr Ridder presented the Cochrane review on music therapy and dementia (Vink et al, 2009), which did not show positive results about music therapy, and wondered ‘how we can change these facts and design studies that integrate practice-based research in controlled designs?’

The last day’s spotlight presentations were focused on *‘Music Therapy and Research’*. Dr G. Trondalen (Norway) focused on ‘music therapy as a present musical aesthetic participation with a multilayered frame of interpretation’, while Dr S. Kim (Korea) questioned ‘how the qualitative aspects of music can be well maintained while the musical elements and human responses are quantified?’ Dr C. O’Callaghan (Australia) and Dr M. Silverman (USA) also reflected on ‘qualitative VS quantitative research’, and the lack of well-designed and replicable randomised controlled trials.

Paper presentations took place in five different areas of the university. Delegates had to choose between 6 to 9 presentations that were taking place at the same time (not always an easy choice!). The quality and scientific level of the presentations were variable, as is often the case in big conferences. My overall impression from the presentations was that music therapists around the world are keen on using research methods in order to show the effects of music therapy. Most speakers had a positive attitude about the future of music therapy, regardless of the financial crisis or the recession that many countries over the world currently face, which affects many music therapists’ professional status. However there were also some negative voices: a Dutch delegate, for instance, stated that music therapy will no longer exist as a profession in ten years from now and the only way to delay this unpleasant development is to provide more research based on the medical model.



Picture 2: One of the locations of the Congress

Presentations of Greek interest

One round table and three oral presentations were given by Greek professionals who work in Greece or abroad:

- *'Designing a New Music Therapy Programme in Greece'*, by D. Psaltopoulou-Kamini, M. Psiliteli, E. Panagiotidou, M. Hatzinasiou, P. Vaiouli, P. Evangelou, and A. Malouta. (Round table)(Greece)
- *'The Effectiveness of Music Therapy in Greece'*, presented by D. Psaltopoulou-Kamini, M. Micheli, and N. Kavardinas (Paper presentation) (Greece)
- *'Musical identities within music therapy: Cancer care, psychiatric hospitals and community settings'* by M. Pothoulaki, R. MacDonald, & J. de Simone (Paper presentation) (UK)
- *'Music therapy and autistic spectrum condition: Theory underpinning practice and practice underpinning theory'* by T. Dimitriadis (Paper presentation) (The Netherlands)

As stated above, the round table was focused on the development of a music therapy training programme in Greece. The second paper presented quantitative research *'which was conducted upon 149 subjects with disabilities'* (Psaltopoulou, Micheli, and Kavardinas, 2011, pp. 70-71). The third presentation (Pothoulaki, McDonald and de Simone) described examples of music therapy work with cancer patients in the UK, whereas the fourth one (Dimitriadis) was more directed to the importance of theory in current music therapy research and practice.

Entertainment and cultural highlights

Participants could make use of a bus tour to the city centre, museums, and tourist attractions. Beyond the music therapy presentations, delegates had the opportunity to attend a Korean course on cooking and a Korean language course.

Last but not least: the performances. These took place every night, including the opening and closing ceremonies. The astonishing Tae Pyunb Moo attracted the attention of all participants on the 5th of July (see picture 3). During the opening and closing ceremonies different musicians and dancers showed some impressive examples of traditional and modernised Korean music.



Picture 3: Traditional Korean Musicians-Dancers

Korea as a host country

With the exception of some occasional technical problems, the organisation of the conference was excellent. One could immediately feel the hospitality and warmth of the hosts, even when there were some language

barriers. We enjoyed traditional meals during lunchtime, we heard stories about the development of music therapy in Korea; and above all, we congratulated Dr Byungchuel Choi for being the next president of the WFMT, following Dr Petra Kern. Interestingly, it is the first time an Asian music therapist has become the president of the WFMT.

Some relevant web-links:

Video clips from the Congress:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FzWV5uBMKY

Conference proceedings:

www.musictherapytoday.wfmt.info/Music_Therapy_Today/MTT_Special_Issue.html

References

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