



## Conference report

# International symposium *'Music therapy in educational settings'*

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International symposium  
'Music therapy in educational settings'

5-6 May 2017

Institute for Musicology and Music Education,  
University of Bremen, Germany



**Dr Anne-Katrin Jordan** studied educational science, musicology, and music therapy. She graduated with a PhD in empirical music education, and is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher (quantitative and mixed-methods in music therapy) and as a music therapist in child and adolescent psychiatry.

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**Dr Philippa Derrington** has been Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader of MSc Music Therapy at Queen Margaret University since 2013. She previously worked in schools in Cambridgeshire, England, and led a national 'Music Therapy for Youth at Risk' study, sponsored by The Music Therapy Charity.

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Although music therapy in educational settings is not a new subject it is still very topical. With the ratification of the UN convention and the change to an inclusive school system, the demand for support in schools is high. In countries such as Norway, music therapy has an established role in schools. But what is the state of research in this area? Is there evidence of the effects of music therapy in educational settings? What kind of research is needed in future?

These questions formed the starting point for this symposium, which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at the Institute for Musicology and Music Education at the University of Bremen, Germany (see photograph 1 for symposium delegates, and photograph 3 for an impression of Bremen).

Thanks to funding from the University of Bremen under the Federal Government's 'Excellence

Initiative' scheme, Anne-Katrin Jordan was able to hold this symposium and thereby bring together an international and interdisciplinary team to discuss and plan further steps. The symposium was organised by an international research group: Eric Pfeifer (Freiburg, Germany), Thomas Stegemann (Vienna, Austria), Sandra Lutz Hochreutener (Zurich, Switzerland), and Anne-Katrin Jordan (Bremen, Germany).

Oral presentations, poster presentations, group work, as well as exchange and discussion, formed the core of the symposium. This report briefly highlights some key points.

Thomas Stegemann opened the symposium with a look at music therapy in educational settings from the point of view of a child and adolescent psychiatrist. He reported on a meta-analysis that revealed that one in every six children shows signs



**Photograph 1: The symposium delegates**

of emotional or behavioural disorders

Sandra Lutz Hochreutener explained the situation of music therapy in educational settings (pre-school, mainstream school, music school) in Switzerland. She listed the setting and, importantly, the need to find a 'safe place', as well as the atmosphere and interdisciplinary cooperation, as some of the challenges to the work. However, music therapy in schools offers the opportunity to work directly with pupils' inner conflicts that are somehow connected to the school, e.g. school anxiety.

Andreas Heye (Paderborn) gave a talk on the pros and cons of music therapy in educational institutions from a music psychology perspective. He generated discussion around the question of whether music therapy in schools should be described as psychotherapy and what kind of music therapy can or should take place in schools respectively.

Eric Pfeifer gave an overview of relevant meta-analysis and systematic reviews regarding the effects of music therapy for children and adolescents, followed by a summary of the current state of music therapy in Austrian schools. The first day of the symposium ended with group work where key findings were gathered and discussed.

Two presentations focusing on practical work kicked off the second day. Firstly, Ingeborg Nebelung (Horten, Norway) delivered an insight into the Norwegian practice of music therapy in schools. She presented examples of work with children with learning disabilities in special units that are affiliated to mainstream schools, and illustrated her talk, highlighting 'golden moments', with videos. Secondly, Karin Holzwarth (Hamburg, Germany) reported on many years' experience

working at the music school in Hamburg and as a music therapist in schools. She discussed how this work, both in individual and group sessions, requires elements of depth and understanding of developmental psychology.

Referring to both these presentations, Anne-Katrin Jordan then presented a comparison study between music therapy sessions in a Norwegian and a German school. With the help of video analyses based on the AQR instrument (Assessing the Quality of Relationship), she demonstrated that similar music therapeutic methods (for example, the welcome song) involve different intentions and therefore require a differentiated view.

Philippa Derrington (Edinburgh, UK) introduced the development of music therapy in schools in the UK, with a focus on inclusion and results from a large study which involved interviews with adolescents with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. The young people explained that the combination of playing and talking was important to them, and some even reported on noticing how their concentration in class felt easier after a music therapy session. Henrike Roisch (Munich, Germany) presented the violence-prevention project 'Drum Power' (in cooperation with Andreas Wölfl) by means of video extracts. Some reported effects from the programme included less aggression among young people, more positive social behaviour, and generally a better atmosphere in class.

As well as the talks, six posters were presented. Daniela Lechner (Vienna, Austria) and Ruth Diesing (Freiburg, Germany), two music therapy graduates, introduced the results from their master's dissertations. Both dissertations provided an overview of assessment instruments used in

music therapy in German-speaking regions from 2000 to 2016: one for children from birth to six years, and the other for adolescents aged 13 to 18. Claudia Vogel (Vienna, Austria) and Lisa Prechtl (Nuremberg, Germany) also presented results from their master's research project: Claudia Vogel gave an overview of music therapy in both special schools and music schools in Austria; Lisa Prechtl introduced her project 'Echt Stark' to help 11-year-old girls with low self-esteem. Yvonne Mäder, Sandra Lutz Hochreutener and Annkathrin Pöpel (Zurich, Switzerland) presented a poster focusing on music therapy and resilience. In this empirical study, pre-school children with migrant backgrounds showed significant changes in the field of social abilities or social competencies. Finally, Wolfgang Zaindl (Munster, Germany) provided an insight into the evaluation of an integrative music therapy programme for teachers.



**Photograph 2: Workshop and discussion**

A fruitful discussion amongst the delegates then followed (see photograph 2). They looked at aims, challenges (for example, the cooperation between music therapists and teachers in schools), strategies for implementation (for example, the importance of political work and public relations), definitions and future research studies; identifying recovery and joy as highlighted as central aims. Multi-centred studies and standardised assessment instruments as well as a needs analysis of children and teachers were discussed in terms of future collaborative research.

Overall, it was an inspiring symposium that also created healthy debate about music therapy in various educational settings. All papers will be published by the end of 2017 by Waxmann Publishing Co.



**Photograph 3: The town musicians of Bremen**

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