

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 21st ISME Special Music Education and Music Therapy Commission pre-conference seminar '*Music across the lifespan: The role of special music education and music therapy*'

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CONFERENCE DETAILS

ISME Special Music Education and Music Therapy Commission pre-conference seminar '*Music across the lifespan: The role of special music education and music therapy*'

Mozarteum University, The Orff Institute
12-14 July 2018, Salzburg, Austria

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Brandon Meeks is from Charlotte, North Carolina in the United States. He is a 2018 graduate of Florida State University where he received a Master of Music Education and is currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Music Education from Florida State University. While at FSU, Mr. Meeks has conducted research in teacher training and studies conducting with the university bands. Meeks is also a National Board-Certified Teacher. [bmm16e@my.fsu.edu] **Victoria Warnet** is currently pursuing her PhD in Music Education at Florida State University, where she received her BME in 2012, and her Master's in Music Education in 2018. While at FSU, her research interests have included jazz band, teacher training, and music for students with special needs. Prior to returning to graduate school, she was the Director of Bands at Tavares Middle School and the Associate Director at Tavares High School in Tavares, FL. [vmw08@my.fsu.edu]

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The Special Music Education and Music Therapy Commission pre-conference seminar of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) was held in Salzburg, Austria at the Mozarteum University and Orff Institute on 12-14 July 2018. The Special Music Education and Music Therapy Commission is one of eight commissions associated with ISME, and it was established to further continue the development of special music education and music therapy in an effort to highlight the role of music in human life. Commissioners for the conference included commission chair, Melita Belgrave, along with, Michelle Hairston, Markku Kaikkonen, Giorgos Tsisiris, Kimberly VanWeelden, and Wei-Chun Wang. The overall focus of the three-day conference was to bring awareness of new ideas and research that pertained to the special music education and/or music therapy professions. Specific

visions and goals set by the conference leaders consisted of advocating for students in need of special support, sharing international perspectives on current research, enhancing the quality of life for all children and adults with special educational needs and other health conditions, and improving the professional training of practitioners working in special education and music therapy (see VanWeelden, Tsiris & Belgrave, 2018).

The conference began on Thursday 12th July with the opening session at the Mozarteum University. The goals and visions of the conference were presented, as well as introductions by the commission chairs and site hosts. The stimulating goals for the conference, coupled with the welcoming nature of the hosts and general excitement of the attendees set the tone for the dynamic and inspirational conference that lay ahead. The highlight of the opening session was a performance by Vollgas Connected (Photograph 1). Vollgas Connected is an inclusive rock band style group from Germany. The following brief description of the group was provided in the conference program:

The Music School Fürth's unique Project in Germany "Berufung Musiker" (Profession Musician) where young people with intellectual disabilities have the chance of an apprenticeship as musicians has been tremendously successful. The band "Vollgas," has become one of the most wanted bands in Germany since its foundation in the Year 2009. Amongst other triumphs they rocked the Bavarian Parliament, the Bavarian State Chancellery, the Federal Congress of the Music Schools (VdM) and they even played for the German Parliament in Berlin. (ISME, 2018, p. 4)

Vollgas Connected consisted of musicians playing saxophones, trumpets, guitars, bass guitars, auxiliary percussionists, vocalists, a piano player, and an accordion player. The group performed



Photograph 1: Vollgas Connected performing at the opening session

various hit songs that everyone in the audience was able to connect to. One of the highlights of the Vollgas Connected performance was watching the performers bond with one another and seeing how much they enjoyed playing their instruments together. By the end of their performance, the entire

audience was on their feet clapping and singing along. Many people mentioned that seeing this group perform inspired them to look into starting a similar group back in their home towns. The Vollgas Connected group served as the perfect model for emulating the goals of the conference while getting everyone enthusiastic and motivated to learn.

The remainder of the first day consisted of presentations. The schedule was designed so that conference attendees listened to three 20-minute presentations. These presentations centered around topics that were relevant to both music educators and music therapists. For example, the presentation *Music Education for All* by Shirley Winner and Alon Ram was about the development and implementation of a nationwide curriculum for special music education, while Liza Lee and Han-Ju Ho presented a case study on the development of a child with disabilities using a holistic music educational approach. It was interesting to see presentations from all over the world. Despite the diversity of practices presented, it seemed that the goal of bringing music to all people and enabling them to experience it irrespective of their abilities and disabilities was a common denominator across cultural contexts.

The types of presentations also varied, ranging from research-focused to more experiential and participatory presentations. Regardless of the presentation type and focus, delegates were supportive and welcoming to new ideas and research in the field. As participants in an international conference for the first time, this aspect of the conference was enlightening. Instead of getting caught up in issues that pertain to our home country, we were able to step outside of our comfort zone, take a look at the global picture of the field, and develop a critical yet supportive stance.

Toward the end of the first day, there was also a poster session. Attendees were given the opportunity to see various research and practitioner related posters, and speak with the presenters. Examples of poster session titles included *It's my Time: Older Adults' Motivations for Joining an Intergenerational Rock Band*; *Supporting Social Development in Students in Preschool through Music-Making: Teaching The Teachers*; *Grooming the Next Generation of Piano Teachers*; *Music Therapy Intervention to Meet Parents' Needs in the NICU: A Pilot Study*; *Developing A Music Program for Adults with Developmental and/or Physical Disabilities*; and *Interactive Sequential Pattern Analysis for Children With Down Syndrome*. Even though the posters were from many countries all around the world, we recognised some commonalities in terms of the research and practices being conducted. Through speaking with many of the researchers and practitioners who created the



Photograph 2: Outside of the Orff Institute
(From left: Brandon Meeks, Kimberly VanWeelden, Victoria Warnet, and Lori Gooding)

posters, we were able to take away new concepts and research ideas which we hope to apply back in our own practice settings.

After a full day of presentations and performances, there was a group dinner planned at Stigelkeller. On the way to dinner, we were able to walk through Salzburg and experience some of the rich historical background that the city had to offer. We walked through the beautiful Mirabell Palace and Gardens which was right next door to the Mozarteum University. Right around the corner, we were also able to make a stop at the residence of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart for a quick photo opportunity. Dinner was held at an elegant family owned restaurant which was close to the beautiful and historic Hohensalzburg Fortress and had a beautiful view of the entire city of Salzburg. Dinner provided many opportunities for fellowship and networking amongst conference attendees and their families.

On Friday 13th July, the conference was held at the Orff Institute in Salzburg. The conference schedule was divided into tracks so that delegates could attend sessions and presentations based on their interest or field of study. There were four tracks: Teaching/Pedagogy, Special Needs/Teaching, Music Education for All Ages, and Music Therapy. Sessions in each track varied from research presentations to hands-on demonstrations, and audience participation. Examples of teacher education sessions were *Music Teachers' Knowledge of Special Education Terminology*, *Inclusive Piano Studios*, and a presentation on *Enriching Music Lives: Lessons Learned from Teacher Surveys on Inclusion* by Judith Jellison – a world research leader in music education and music therapy from the US. Having read and cited so much of her research, it was inspiring for us to see Jellison speak and to meet her in person. Similar to the schedule on Thursday, three 20-minute sessions were presented in each track.

The closing session included a performance by Die Kunterbunten 14er, which is an inclusive band ensemble at the Orff Institute (Photograph 3). Similar to the opening session performance, this group did not disappoint. They had many instruments with adaptations which allowed all of the band members to contribute and participate. The performances at this conference reminded us how much



Photograph 3: Die Kunterbunten 14er performing at the closing session

joy can come from music and why we should make it possible for everyone to participate. At the close of this conference, we named the new ISME Commissioners (2018-2020): Giorgos Tsisiris (chair) (UK), Kimberly VanWeelden (chair elect) (USA), Matthew Breaden (Australia), Melissa Bremmer (The Netherlands), Erik Esterbauer (Austria), Michelle Hairston (USA), and Weichun Wang (Taiwan). As we were leaving the Orff Institute, the hosts invited us all to sign the guest book of the Institute; this is the same book that was once signed by Carl Orff himself.

On Saturday 14th July, there was an excursion: the Sound of Music Bus Tour around Salzburg (Photograph 4). During the tour, the bus was filled with people singing their favourite songs from the movie as we travelled from stop to stop. This experience allowed conference participants to see some gorgeous scenic views around Salzburg, including the famous Untersberg mountain which the von Trapp family allegedly used to escape from the Nazis to Switzerland. Toward the end of the tour, the bus stopped in the small town of Mondsee where we were able to see the famous church where the wedding of Maria and Baron von Trapp was filmed in the movie. Here we were also given a little bit of time to explore the town and took that opportunity to grab a local staple, apple strudel, which did not disappoint. Four hours later, after beautiful photos, many delicious apple strudels, and many verses of *Do Re Mi*, the tour and the conference came to a close with another walk through the gorgeous Mirabell Gardens. We all parted ways, leaving with many new research and teaching ideas, as well as the many new friends we all made at the conference.

The next ISME Commission pre-conference seminar will take place in the summer of 2020 in Finland. We look forward to seeing you there.



Photograph 4: Views from the Sound of Music tour

REFERENCES

- ISME (2018). *Conference programme*: ISME Special Music Education and Music Therapy Commission Pre-Conference Seminar 'Music Across the Lifespan: The Role of Special Music Education and Music Therapy', 12-14 July 2018, University Mozarteum Salzburg, The Orff Institute, Salzburg, Austria.
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