

## REPORT

Special Feature | Music therapy in dementia and end-of-life care: Mediterranean perspectives

# Music therapy in Montenegro: Perspectives on the current situation

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### ABSTRACT

Music therapy is in the process of inclusion in Montenegrin society, but it is not officially recognised and acknowledged, and there are no training programmes. Montenegro currently has only two music therapists, neither of whom works in the country. Given the early development of the profession in the country, this report provides information on what has been done in the field of music therapy in Montenegro until today, with no explicit focus on dementia or end-of-life care. An ongoing two-year project supported by the Montenegrin Ministry of Science, *Musical Heritage of Montenegro – Musical Practices of Montenegro and their Potential* (MusiH), will offer one segment oriented towards applied ethnomusicological approaches to music therapy and concrete therapeutic practice will be organised for the first time.

### KEYWORDS

music therapy,  
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### GENERAL REMARKS

Music therapy as a therapeutic discipline has been maintaining its significant place in work with those who need such a type of therapeutic assistance for several decades. Music therapy, which is already a widely recognised and respected profession and discipline in many developed parts of the Western world, does not exist in Montenegro. The Montenegrin public nowadays is largely not acquainted with basic information regarding the aims and elementary methods of music therapy and its practical uses for therapeutic purposes.

There is a need for the country to move forward, using the information on what has been done in the field of music therapy in Montenegro until today as a starting point. Firstly, attention should be given to the active Montenegrin music therapists. Currently, to our

knowledge, there are two qualified Montenegrin music therapists. Both do not live in the country, precisely due to the lack of opportunity to find employment. Until now they have been engaged in diverse ways in the field of music therapy in Montenegro as diaspora experts.

## MUSIC THERAPY WORKSHOPS

In the course of the previous two years, five workshops were held in Montenegro, one of which was held at the national Music Academy. The lecturers were given by Mirjana Rajčić together with Maria Jesus del Olmo and Alicia Lorenzo from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Spain. The workshops were attended by around a hundred professional musicians, the students of the Music Academy, graduate psychologists and special educators, as well as parents of children with disabilities. The workshops were aimed at acquainting the Montenegrin public with basic information and elementary methods of contemporary music therapy practice.

## MUSIC THERAPY PUBLICATIONS

The book *Music and We*, authored by Mirjana Rajčić, was published in 2019 by the Institute for Textbooks Publishing and Teaching Aids, Podgorica. The creation of the written materials in the Montenegrin language assists with the better understanding of music therapy and its application within the country. The publication encompasses chapters offering historical perspectives on the development of music therapy discipline, reflections on the influence of sound on human beings, on multiple intelligences, on different types and applications of music therapy, as well as on music therapy techniques and improvisation. As such, the book will provide a broad spectrum of general information to the public.

Music therapy has also found its place in a Montenegrin book for ninth-grade students which focuses on the subject of music culture, where, in the scope of a chapter under the title “Magical Power of Music”, the author, Dobrila Popović, explains the influence of music on cognitive functioning, motor skills, emotional development, social skills and quality of life, by means of active and passive musical experiences, such as improvisation, song, dance and listening to music (Popović et al., 2017).

## MUSIC THERAPY AND MEDIA

In the process of acquainting the broad and professional public with this notion, the media represents one of the key partners, particularly in Montenegro, bearing in mind that this is a country with almost 620,000 inhabitants and, thus, the flow of information is made easier to a certain extent. The activities which have been organised so far have been followed by the

media within the geographical areas where they were based, but also on a national level and beyond. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the public national broadcasting service televised the programme “Horizont” (“Horizon” in English) in which the issue of the need for and possibility of the introduction of music therapy practice, with a particular overview of work with children with disabilities, was brought to the public’s attention for the first time. The implementation of workshops and interviews with Mirjana Rajčić was covered by the local media, such as Culture Corner (2016), RTV Budva (2018), Fosmedia (2017), Portal Analitika (2016), but also the regional news outlet Free Europe (2017). Such activities and initiatives always provoke huge interest and obtain the support of the media.

## MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH

As of April 2019, the Music Academy launched a two-year project, supported by the Montenegrin Ministry of Science, *Musical Heritage of Montenegro – Musical Practices of Montenegro and their Potential* (MusiH). The project enables a new overview of Montenegro’s musical legacy and its heritage in relation to the country’s cultural history, and studies of culture including art history and theory. The project encourages scientific and artistic research through the cooperation of ethnomusicologists, music theorists and creators in the field of musical art, and it brings new interpretations and views of the musical heritage of Montenegro.

One segment of the project is oriented toward the application of music therapy, and this is the first attempt to organise such therapeutic practices in the country. Based on the project’s collected materials and drawing on existing findings in the field of ethnomusicology in Montenegro, therapeutic workshops will be organised which will rely on Montenegrin musical heritage and its application for music therapy purposes. The target groups of these workshops include children with developmental difficulties and their parents, prisoners, and geriatric patients. Tatjana Krkeljić (University of Montenegro), Mirjana Rajčić, Maria Jesus del Olmo and Alicia Lorenzo (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) will be responsible for the organisation and implementation of these workshops.

In line with the aforementioned areas of interest, the research component of the MusiH project will generate new knowledge around the preservation and applicability of Balkan folk music. This includes knowledge around the potential applicability of Balkan folk in therapeutic practice. Although the use of such songs is ordinary in music therapy practice in the places where it exists, research in this area has not been carried out so far, according to our knowledge. Balkan folk songs will be used at the project workshops, aiming to explore perception and modalities of these songs’ processing and presentation for therapeutic purposes. We will start with the basic work within the workshops, after which we will continue to focus on different groups – work with the elderly and young, children with disabilities.

The cultural cooperation among the project partners – University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), University of Opole (Poland), Montclair State University (USA), and University of Montenegro (Montenegro) – along with the cooperation with experts, will be the basis of the project. The preservation of the music and cultural heritage of the Western Balkan countries represents the priority of our cultural workers, including the participants of this project, while the concrete and applicable discourse of musical heritage is an innovative practice in music therapy.

In 2020, there is a planned visit to Montclair State University by the project manager and a member of the project team from the University of Montenegro. The study visit to the US by the Montenegrin partners will be organised with the aim of learning more about the module of music therapy at Montclair State University. The expected result of the visit is the preparation of the platform and creation of the sustainable model of the implementation of the module of music therapy at the Music Academy of the University of Montenegro, which is essential for the creation of new, and strengthening of existing, job positions, economic growth, and improving the quality of life of the citizens of Montenegro.

## STEPS FOR THE FUTURE OF MUSIC THERAPY

The power of music has always been recognised as a potent medium in the healing of individuals and society, but in the territory of Montenegro, as well as in its neighbouring countries, there are no sufficient and clear findings on the application of music as therapy. The necessity and interest in implementing music therapeutic practice in Montenegro are evident. However, several aggravating factors have been observed at this moment. A main difficulty is the lack of recognition of music therapy as a legally regulated therapeutic practice and the lack of appropriate staff. The first step toward success would be creating a procedure for legal regulation of music therapy by the Ministry of Health in Montenegro so it could become a legitimate therapeutic practice. This should be done by the selected professionals from this and similar professional fields. Licensing of music therapy is an expected prerequisite in order to launch long-term projects, aided by national support programmes, but also potentially through international projects, such as ERASMUS+, Music Moves Europe, Horizon 2020 and many others. The development of such projects in the field are essential as they would promote cooperation with experts and institutions from other countries within and beyond Europe, through the support of the EU and other funds.

Another challenge is the lack of trained music therapists within the country. Although there is a significant interest among the youth, the education of a music therapist is possible only outside of Montenegro; and, along with this, their return to the country would not be certain, particularly due to the non-existence and non-recognition of the profession. Montenegro currently has only two music therapists, neither of whom works in the country precisely due to the lack of professional recognition. Therefore, the participation of the

university, i.e. the Music Academy, and the relevant academics from the competent institutions is of a great significance for the development of future projects in the field. There is large interest and, to a certain extent, possibility to adapt the teaching curriculum of the Music Academy in the near future, and orient it towards music therapy as a course (subject), but also potentially as a separate study programme. The education of young musicians and the possibility of finding a job in the field of music therapy in the future are the objectives of our upcoming activities. Networking and connecting with experienced music therapy institutes and universities, where such studies are organised, will be of huge importance for the launching of academic studies in this region in the near future. The development of music therapy in Montenegro will largely depend on those who are ready but, above all, qualified and trained to present such an idea to a wider audience and then subsequently implement it.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the increased interest of professionals and of the general public, music therapy as a discipline and profession does not exist in Montenegro. There are no practising music therapists in the country, the profession is not officially recognised, and there are no training programmes. "Asocijacija muzikoterapije Bar", an NGO association, has been founded, and two Montenegrin therapists, Mirjana Rajčić and Milica Šoć, based outside the country, have been working as the diaspora with the aim to support the existing initiatives and the future development of music therapy in their native country. Among these initiatives, several workshops have been offered and an active debate was launched about the reasons and manners of the future application of music therapy. The Music Academy, as the only higher music education institution, has launched the project MusiH (2019-2021). Supported by the Ministry of Science, this project will enable the provision of the first music therapy sessions with two target groups: children with development issues and the elderly, along with the applied discourse of Montenegrin musical heritage. Accreditation of a course and, possibly, a study module under the title *music therapy* is currently considered, and its successful implementation will depend partly on the collaboration between appropriate staff and partner institutions.

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Ελληνική περίληψη | Greek abstract

## Η μουσικοθεραπεία στο Μαυροβούνιο: Προοπτικές για την τρέχουσα κατάσταση

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### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η μουσικοθεραπεία είναι σε διαδικασία συμπερίληψής της στην κοινωνία του Μαυροβουνίου, αν και δεν αποτελεί αναγνωρισμένο και πιστοποιημένο επάγγελμα από το κράτος, ούτε υπάρχουν αντίστοιχα εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα. Στο Μαυροβούνιο αυτή τη στιγμή υπάρχουν μόνο δύο μουσικοθεραπευτές, εκ των οποίων κανένας δεν εργάζεται στη χώρα. Με δεδομένη την πρώιμη φάση ανάπτυξης του επαγγέλματος στη χώρα, η παρούσα αναφορά παρέχει πληροφορίες ως προς την κατάσταση της μουσικοθεραπείας στο Μαυροβούνιο έως σήμερα, χωρίς να επικεντρώνεται στην άνοια ή τη φροντίδα στο τέλος της ζωής. Μία τρέχουσα διετής μελέτη που υποστηρίζεται από το Υπουργείο Επιστημών του Μαυροβουνίου, με τίτλο *Musical Heritage of Montenegro – Musical Practices of Montenegro and their Potential* (MusiH), θα φέρει ένα τμήμα των εφαρμοσμένων προσεγγίσεων της εθνομουσικολογίας προς το πεδίο της μουσικοθεραπείας, με αποτέλεσμα να δομηθούν για πρώτη φορά σαφείς θεραπευτικές πρακτικές.

### ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ

μουσικοθεραπεία, Μαυροβούνιο, MusiH