



SPECIAL ISSUE

Guided Imagery and Music: Contemporary European perspectives and developments

Conference report

12th European Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) Conference

‘European perspectives on Guided Imagery and Music: Visions, challenges and crossroads’

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Anavyssos, Athens, Greece



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The 12th European GIM Conference took place on 13-18 September 2016 and was held in the Eden Beach Resort Hotel in Anavyssos, a beautiful small resort town on the outskirts of Athens, Greece. The theme of the conference was *‘European Perspectives on Guided Imagery and Music: Visions, Challenges and Crossroads’* with the pre-conference offering a special selection of workshops focusing on *‘Expanding GIM: Combining practices’*. I was privileged to be able to participate in both the pre-conference and conference, and I can say that the organisers managed to offer us all an outstanding and holistic experience.

This report offers an outline of all the interesting and exciting aspects of this conference: presentations, workshops, events and, of course, the establishment of the European Association of Music and Imagery (EAMI).

‘VISIONS, CHALLENGES AND CROSSROADS’

This GIM conference in Athens managed to gather together the GIM community from all around the world. Bringing together people from the US, Australia, Canada, Asia, South Africa as well as Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Israel, Germany, Greece, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The conference literally became the place where the knowledge and the wisdom of the pioneers in the field met the spirit, the new ideas and the inspiration of the new members of the GIM family; a family that is constantly growing, changing and developing through challenges and crossroads, yet always with a vision of becoming better and stronger.



Photograph 1: Opening ceremony welcome greetings from the Head of the Organising Committee, Evangelia Papanikolaou

This conference held a very special meaning for me personally. Being Greek myself, attending a conference hosted in my home country, as I now live and work in Switzerland, and even more so, graduating as a new GIM Fellow there, was something overwhelming for me on its own. Yet it was amazing to see that most people, if not all, shared the same overwhelming feelings with me. Something new, something different was happening and people could sense that. Even a look at the Book of Abstracts (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016a, 2016b) for both the pre- and main conference (and, of course, everything that the Organising Committee had planned for us) could give an idea on that matter. Very interesting presentations, outstanding keynote speakers, a special selection of workshops and posters, as well as, beautiful social events including visits to a few of Athens' and Attica Peninsula's most amazing archaeological sites, namely Cape Sounio, Acropolis, and a performance at the Herodeon Ancient Theatre, a night out dining in the fish village of Lavrio, a very beautiful graduating ceremony and, of course, the establishment of EAMI, made this conference an outstanding experience for us all. The hosts managed to provide us with a conference that stood up to its title, *'European Perspectives on Guided Imagery and Music: Visions, Challenges, and Crossroads'*.



Photograph 2: Moments from the graduation ceremony

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS OF THE PRE- AND MAIN CONFERENCE

The years in which we all currently live, no matter which part of the world, have seen rapid changes; unfortunately, not only good ones. They have brought political changes, financial changes as well as instability and crisis. Europe, struggling to cope with a humanitarian crisis as people trying to flee from unsafe environments, searching for a better future, can be a very vivid example that can also illustrate the new challenges we as therapists and as human beings need to face. New challenges which create new therapeutic needs and call for new techniques and new adaptations of all therapeutic models we used to know; Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) being one of them. For that reason, the word that could clearly underline and reflect my sense of the conference keynote speeches, roundtable discussions, oral presentations, posters, and workshops in general would be the word 'new'. And by 'new' I mean the new needs and challenges as presented that have created new ideas, approaches, connections, visions and achievements. The need to grow, change and adapt have brought new co-operations, combinations, awareness and knowledge as GIM is more widely accepted, enters new clinical areas and answers more therapeutic needs.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Inspiring and very interesting keynote speeches set the tone. Denise Grocke, the President of the Music and Imagery Association of Australia with her speech *'Growing the GIM Seed in the Antipodes'* shared with us the knowledge and *the* lessons learned from the challenging process of developing GIM in Australia and New Zealand, "highlighting events that contributed to the development of the Bonny Method of GIM, and the challenges encountered along the way" (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 8).

Orestis Giotakos, a Greek psychiatrist, talking about *'The Neuropsychology of Creativity and Emotional Memories Retrieval in GIM Therapy'*, suggested that:

"This therapy [GIM] provides the means that evoke the disconnected affective memories and mobilises inner resources, resulting in a coherent narrative of autobiographic memory. Furthermore, GIM therapy supports creativity and states of mind, in an open-ended, free-

associative, encouraging, and essentially non-manipulative process” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 8).

Dag Körlin, psychiatrist and Scientific Director of IMAGEing-European GIM Trainings from Sweden, presented us with *[the] core elements of the Bonny Method [that] seem to be lacking in Music and Imagery (MI) adaptations*. Focusing on implications for travelling, guiding, processing and training, he presented us with the fact that:

“In Bonny’s original method, an accepting, encouraging, and non-directive verbal dialogue was developed for guiding in the music listening phase; this was inspired by the humanistic tradition of spontaneity, creativity-in-the-moment and affirmation and is lacking in MI adaptations, as music is listened to in silence. What then remains of humanistic dialogue in MI when various cognitive and psychodynamic inquiries are introduced in the verbal post-session and integration? What happens with the music experience when the guiding voice is lacking? At what point does a MI adaptation no longer qualify as informed by the Bonny Method of GIM? What are the implications for training programmes?” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 9)

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations (oral and poster) were inspirational. I found myself being very touched by the spirit and creativity brought into practice from very passionate presenters. I was very pleased to see GIM practitioners being part of extended therapeutic teams, and GIM techniques and adaptations being used, especially with patients who are at other times treated by means of the traditional means of therapy, namely verbal or cognitive forms of therapy. Pilot and feasibility studies were presented that open paths and possibilities in therapy and create new clinical areas.

I was very impressed with the amount of papers presenting the use of GIM modifications and adaptations to feed either the special needs of the patients or the therapeutic settings. Charlotte Dammeyer (Denmark) with her paper ‘*GIM in Psychiatric Setting – What is Possible?*’ presented the “interesting challenges, changes and possibilities [that] occur when combining GIM with Guided Music and Body Listening and a variety of other adapted GIM formats”, (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 12), when working with “patients in adult psychiatry [who] are in a condition that does not allow them to benefit from classical Bonny Method sessions, but highly from GIM adapted to

their specific needs” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 12). Gunn Karoline Fugle from Norway (*‘The Rhythm that Scares the Monster’*) presented the use of modified GIM with children in a child psychiatry outpatient unit using the case of a child who suffers from complex trauma after child abuse and neglect.

Presentations about traumatised refugees, with refugees being a relatively new category in need due to the circumstances, especially in Europe, also fit in this category. Torben Moe, Bolette Beck, Catharina Messel and Steen Lund Meyer (Denmark) with their paper ‘*The Feasibility of Music and Imagery with Refugees Diagnosed with PTSD*’, presented their pilot study on “traumatized refugees [who] suffer not only from complex traumatisation, but also struggle with acculturation, social problems, and a new language” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 19), and proposed that “Music and Imagery could be beneficial as music can create an immediate contact beyond words” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 19). Catharina Messel with ‘*Pain Management in GIM with a Traumatized Refugee*’ described a case study from the refugee research project concerning an Iraqi refugee with PTSD who had been tortured and suffered from severe chronic pain.

Marte Lie Noer (Norway) presented the ‘*Breathing Space in Music for Adolescents with Eating Disorders in a Family-Focused Programme*’; an interesting piece of work with adolescents with eating disorders and their parents. Working therapeutically in separate groups, adolescents and their parents were “invited to become more observant and confident in relation to their own signals and communication with one’s own body and in interplay with each other, [...] and it seems as if [in music] they find something they have been isolated from” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 18).

Another interesting series of presentations focused on the use of GIM and its adaptations to enhance the quality of life for people suffering from chronic, persistent, or life-threatening illnesses. Research papers, pilot, and feasibility studies like ‘*GIM Research in the Greek Hospital: Exploring the Effects of GIM with Women in Treatment of Gynaecologic Cancer: A Feasibility Study*’ by Evangelia Papanikolaou from Greece, focused on the “impact of GIM on quality of life for this population during chemotherapy treatment” (b, p.20-21), and it is the first PhD research study on GIM in a Greek hospital setting. The ‘*Clinical Application of GIM in Treating Adults with Complex Chronic Pain*’ by Ilan Sanfi, Bolette Beck and Erik

Christensen (Denmark) presented the clinical application of GIM for adults with complex chronic pain, and suggested that “GIM can afford an important therapeutic contribution in addressing the bodily, emotional, social and existential aspects of pain” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 24). Marilena Smyrnioti from Greece presented her pilot study ‘*GIM Therapy in Patients with Persistent and Chronic Headache*’, and demonstrated that “the patients that received GIM therapy adjacent to medical treatment, showed significant improvement in overall quality of life, number of crises and duration of pain, anxiety, and depression level [...], as well as a decrease in some psychopathology symptoms” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 26). The experimental research on the ‘*Impact of Group Music and Imagery (GrpMI) in Women with Fibromyalgia*’ by Esperanza Torres (Spain) was also very interesting as to how “it is advisable to use this treatment as a complementary non-pharmacological intervention, due to the power of images, the specific emotional activation of the music, and [the] therapeutic power of the group” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 28). I was also more than happy to present to the audience my paper on the use of ‘*Guided Imagery and Music and the Visually Impaired*’. A study on the potential of using GIM as a therapeutic medium for the visually impaired population, the significance and role of music as an external stimulus, and the possibility of the GIM experience to be a substitute for external reality.

As already mentioned, for me, this conference brought along new ideas, fields of practice, and possibilities. It brought promise, enthusiasm and curiosity. Presentations like ‘*Through the Looking Glass: Psilocybin assisted therapy and GIM*’ by Marilyn Clark from the USA revealed the “renewed interest in psychedelic assisted therapy” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 11), and the new possibilities and new opportunities for GIM Fellows as “uniquely qualified to enter this new growing field” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 11). ‘*The Music Star-a new star in psychiatry*’, a specially designed application for iPad that was developed in spring 2015 in the ICUs at Aalborg University Hospital-Psychiatry, “enabling patients and staff to quickly “pick and play” music as an intervention to reduce anxiety, achieve focused attention or for mere sleep-support” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 10), and the early experiences from its use were presented by Lars Rye Bertelsen from Denmark. I considered both presentations to be unique and intriguing.

I was also very pleased that topics like ‘*Cultural Sensitivity in GIM*’ (Alison Short from Australia) and ‘*Presence and Attunement in the Therapeutic Relationship*’ (Katarina Mårtensson Blom from Sweden) were introduced to remind us of how crucial the presence of the therapist is for GIM practice, and how we need to adapt to the new challenges to be able to promote change and development for our clients, especially now that “in the context of multicultural communities worldwide, culturally diverse clients seek GIM sessions” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 25). To add to this long list of interesting and educational presentations, I would finally add the one given by Gabriella Giordanella Perilli from Italy, ‘*From Guided Imagery and Music to Imagery Evoked by Music: Methods to Bring up Tacit Knowledge into Awareness: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*’, the presentation of Martin Lawes from the UK ‘*Illusion or Reality? Music as Adapting to the Traveller’s Needs in GIM and as Background Presence*’ where the “apparent adaptability of the co-therapist (as the music is often characterised in GIM)” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 16) is explored, Dikla Kerem’s (Israel) ‘*Moved by the Music*’, “an explorative project on GIM with movement therapy students, [...], [where] authentic movement was offered and encouraged as an alternative to mandala drawing” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 15), and Gro Trondalen’s (Norway) ‘*Focused, time-limited Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music*’, a presentation that addressed a “time-limited agreement (with a female executive in her late 30s), in addition to (a) pre-selected issue (that) seemed to offer clarity of structure and purpose in (her) therapy” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 29).

WORKSHOPS

A wide variety of workshops on different topics was held, all of them very interesting, and some of them quite challenging. The participants had the opportunity to become more familiar with GIM adaptations like ‘*Active Body and Music Listening-Utile dulci in GIM Practice*’, a GIM-adaptation developed and presented by Alvhild Gruvstaad (Norway) to “be useful as an everyday-tool for self-caring for both clients and therapists” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016a: 6), and ‘*Music Breathing – Breath grounding and modulation of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music*’ an adaptation of the Bonny Method of GIM to address the special needs of patients with complex post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociation, and

other trauma related disorders, developed and presented for us by Dag Körlin from Sweden.

Delegates explored “the use of visual and tactile stimuli during the GIM process in the form of various Process Art techniques, (MARI symbols, colour and clay, writing)” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016a: 9) during Diane Maris’s (South Africa) workshop *‘GIM and Visual Language: Experiencing the Powerful Influence of Image Exploration on the Music Listening Process’*. The very emotional and touching work of Ilan Sanfi from Denmark *‘Music and Imagery Narratives Specially Designed for Paediatric Patients’* was also presented. The author discussed the effects of Music and Imagery interventions to reduce side effects of chemotherapy in children with cancer, and demonstrated his music concept, which consist of a “series of music and imagery narratives specially composed and designed for paediatric cancer patients at the age of 7-12” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016a: 11-12). A first-hand experience with the original music and imagery narratives was also provided.

Ines Oberscheid from Germany with her workshop *‘Implementing Pre- and Perinatal Traumas into the GIM Therapy’* also gave a very interesting insight on our “basic melody” that is created during the first nine months inside our mother’s womb, and how GIM offers a wonderful platform to detect, bring to a conscious level, transform, and heal early intrusive and hurtful events that have occurred while inside the mother’s womb, during birth or early childhood. Moving on, we were presented with *‘The Integration of GIM Techniques with Improvisation-Based Music Therapy: A Case Example of Work with an Adolescent with Autism and Early Trauma’* (Martin Lawes, UK), *‘Expanded Awareness’* – a workshop on the development of the individual through the integration of all aspects of oneself (Photoulla Potamitou, Cyprus), and finally, the workshop *‘From GIM Narrative to Narration: Composing a Fairy Tale as an Alternative Creative Processing’* (Smirnioti, Trifonopoulou and Tsolka, Greece).

In *‘Combining GIM and Schema Therapy’*, Gert Tuinmann from Germany gave an overview of schema therapy and described the possible interventions with GIM. Leslie Bunt (UK) and Margareta Wårja (Sweden) during their workshop *‘A Long Way from Home: Journeying through the Labyrinth of Life with Ariadne’s Thread’* invited us to explore how ancient myths “can help us in facing contemporary challenges and glimpsing initiations of possible answers” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 31). Isabelle Frohne-Hagemann from

Germany (*‘Supervision for the Supervisors’*) addressed issues involving supervision and invited us to share and exchange thoughts and ideas on this topic.

An opportunity to travel to the contemporary GIM-Programme *‘New Blood’* was given to all participants in the workshop of Svein Fuglestad (Norway). The programme is based on orchestral re-recordings of various tracks by Peter Gabriel, and the “intention with the programme is to give the traveller ‘new ideas and energy’ and might with its “new blood” be a way of touching the inner resonance in people not so familiar with classical music” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 33). How we can “assess and evaluate the client’s development and therapeutic intervention efficacy by comparing narratives of GIM experience; such narratives [that] evolve in non-ordinary and ordinary states of consciousness, thus regard implicit and explicit knowledge” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 34) was the focus of the workshop of Gabriella Giordanella Perilli (Italy) named *‘Imagery and Music Narratives to Access and Evaluate the Client’s Development and the Intervention Efficacy’*.

Maya Story (USA) presented a very interesting intervention development story: *‘Music and Imagery with female military veterans’*. With woman being “the fastest growing demographic among veterans in the US, Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is an issue among returning veterans that causes a significant amount of distress with a high occurrence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 38). M. Story presented the “first stage of a larger protocol that seeks to evaluate Guided Imagery and Music as a treatment modality with MST related to PTSD” (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 38), explaining how she worked with a continuum of music from preferred music pieces to the Bonny Method of GIM. She then invited the audience to pick a piece of music from any genre that one felt a “craving” for in the moment, and listen, move or draw to it.

All workshops proved to be extremely interesting and vivid, giving us the opportunity to gain a better insight of the current GIM practice and research. If I should highlight one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences for me that took place during the pre-conference, it would be the *‘Live’* GIM improvisation. This workshop was divided in two parts. It started with a thematic improvisation that was previously prepared by a group of GIM therapists, including myself. We were given the opportunity to build a three-piece GIM improvised music programme, and perform it live for the rest of the participants while they were

listening in a relaxed state. During the second part of the workshop the participants were involved in an experiment where they were asked to play improvised music together and create a GIM programme spontaneously, bearing in mind the general dynamic structure of a GIM programme, such as peaks and plateaus. The totality of the experience gave the whole group the opportunity to be spontaneous and creative, to play music together, to come closer and get to know each other. It provided a new way of 'being in' the music and listening to the music in GIM. It was the first time I have experienced a live GIM improvisation and would like to thank Anna Böhmig (Greece) and the rest of the participants deeply for this experience.

ROUNDTABLE

The roundtable presented ideas and thoughts on *'Practice and Training in the Bonny Method: European and Wider Perspectives'* (Martin Lawes from the UK, Christina Achter from Germany, Lars Ole Bonde from Denmark, Denise Grocke from Australia, and Esperanza Torres from Spain). Within a context of an evolving spectrum of practice and training, the five panel members focused on the Bonny Method itself.

"To what extent is the method practised in its original form? What are the backgrounds of those who practise it and who are the clients? What is the situation in different countries? What is the current and likely future place of the Bonny Method within the wider spectrum of contemporary practice as this continues to evolve? What are the implications for training and the types and levels of qualification that may be needed in GIM?" (Papanikolaou & Smyrnioti 2016b: 41)

The topic proved to be important and interesting, especially at a time when the European GIM community is working towards forming new training and professional standards that would fit these different needs.

THE FORMATION OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSIC AND IMAGERY (EAMI)

The focus of this conference in Greece was on the European perspectives of GIM. GIM in Europe is growing and stands at a crossroads. Forming the European Association of Music and Imagery (EAMI) became a collective, ongoing process that has been carried out during the past six

conferences involving the whole GIM European community. With conference workshops, discussions, lots of work and meetings for the interim steering board, the European GIM community focused on forming the EAMI that would be independent from the AMI, and able to form its own standards for education and practice more suited to the European context, yet still sharing the same goals and vision, always in good cooperation with the Association for Music and Imagery (AMI).

The question "Can and will we establish a European Association of Music and Imagery?" was posed at this 12th European Conference accompanied by an open discussion and vote. Two EAMI meetings were held during the conference and some of the people who have dreamt and worked towards this goal presented us with this dream and vision, including its challenges. We heard the pros and cons; people talked in favour and against. A very moving and inspirational speech was given by Marilyn Clark who quoted Bonny's words on the vision of GIM, welcoming this new step for the GIM community. Present at all of these EAMI meetings was the President of AMI, Suzannah Scott-Moncrieff, evident of AMI's support through the years to the formation of EAMI as AMI's "growing child".

From my point of view, what really happened there was that people exercised their right to speak their mind, to share their feelings and opinions. And right there, in Athens, Greece, the mother of democracy, people voted. And they voted 'yes'. 'Yes', to the establishment of the EAMI. And the celebration that followed brought us all together. This big, dancing crowd, singing and laughing, hugging, and celebrating the beginning of something new, beautiful, and challenging; of something that will help us grow even bigger and make us stronger.



Photograph 3: Celebrations upon EAMI's establishment

The first Board of EAMI was born in Athens. All of the past Interim Board members offered to continue, and they welcomed two new members. As I read in the first EAMI newsletter, since the conference in Athens the Board have approved the Training Standards which were proposed at the Athens conference, and formed the new Educational Committee composed by Martin Lawes, Lars Ole Bonde, Isabelle Frohne-Hagemann and Evangelia Papanikolaou.

NOT ONLY WORK....

As you set out for Ithaka
 hope the voyage is a long one,
 full of adventure, full of discovery. [...]
 But do not hurry the journey at all.
 Better if it lasts for years,
 so, you are old by the time you reach the island,
 wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
 not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.
 Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
 Without her you would not have set out.
 She has nothing left to give you now.
 And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled
 you.
 Wise as you will have become,
 so full of experience, you will have understood by
 then
 What these Ithakas mean¹

This GIM conference proved also to be a chance for us all to enjoy some good time together, come closer to each other and get to know more about Greek history, ancient Greek music, the antiquities, and the world renowned monuments. LyrAvlos Ensemble performed at the opening ceremony on reconstructed ancient Greek instruments and gave us a taste of the ancient and unique sound. The Fellow's graduation ceremony conducted at the pool area of the hotel was inspired by Cavafis poem *Ithaka*, highlighting the journey that all of us graduates 'set off' years ago, studying and practising GIM as a "journey, full of adventures, full of discovery" hoping that one day we will all become "wealthy with all we have gained on the way". It was a very moving, emotional, and I hope unforgettable moment for all 20 graduates, not to mention fun, as a group jumping in the pool gave the call for the celebration to start, which only ended with a midnight swim at the amazingly warm and welcoming September sea.

¹ Poem by C. P. Cavafis (1863-1933), translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, as cited in the Cavafy Archive website www.cavafy.com.

The visit to Cape Sounio, the evening at the Acropolis and the performance at Herodeon Theater, along with the good, traditional Greek food, the beautiful live music performed at the Gala Dinner, the 'FEMME normale' dance-theatre performance, the beautiful relaxing moments on the beach under the amazing Greek sun, and of course the Greek 'philoxenia' (hospitality), made the 12th European GIM Conference a memorable experience for all of us.



Photograph 4: From left to right: Members of the Organising Committee, Marilena Smyrnioti, Irini Psalti, Anna Boehmig and Evangelia Papanikolaou together with conference members Ilan Sanfi, Maria Samara and Polina Kavoura

I would like to thank all the people responsible for the organisation of this conference. The Scientific Committee for keeping the standards of the presentations (oral and posters) and workshops so high and for giving us the opportunity to learn and grow. The Organising Committee and the *Sonora-Multidisciplinary Society for Music & Research*, for making the experience as nice, relaxing, and memorable as it was and, of course, a special thanks to Evangelia Papanikolaou, Head of the Organising Committee, for making it all happen and in the best way.

We are all looking forward to the next Conference of the European Association of Music and Imagery, from 17-23 September 2018, in Ireland.

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