

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 7th International Conference of the International Association for Music and Medicine (IAMM)

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CONFERENCE DETAILS

The 7th International Conference of the International Association of Music and Medicine (IAMM)

28-29 May 2022, Athens, Greece

30 May-3 June 2022, Online

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The international music and medicine community convened in Athens on May 28-29, 2022 to discuss and celebrate the most recent insights and interdisciplinary efforts in the field. The conference was organised by the International Association of Music and Medicine (IAMM) and hosted by the Athens Conservatory with the support of the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre in Athens, Greece. The in-person presentations and round table discussions were followed by a week of online-only presentations and workshops that took place from May 30 to June 3, 2022. The conference attracted more than 400 participants from over 20 countries, bringing together clinicians, researchers, musicians, students, and community members interested in the intersection of music and health sciences.

Although online conferences have become second nature in the pandemic, the conference committee, chaired by Vera Brandes under the leadership of the IAMM president Suzanne Hanser, bravely opted for a hybrid format. This was a praiseworthy yet demanding undertaking that allowed greater access for people in diverse sociocultural contexts across the world and clearly aligned with the IAMM's global mission to support the development of music and medicine programming in developing countries. For many other attendees and I, this was the first in-person conference since the Covid-19 outbreak in early 2020. Gathering in Athens, one of the world's oldest cities and what some might describe as the cradle of music therapy, provided us with a unique opportunity to not only reflect on the roots of music and medicine but to integrate ancient wisdom with contemporary practices and technological advances that had allowed for this hybrid event to take place.



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Photograph 1: Conference logo

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The IAMM issued an open call for submissions seeking significant contributions to public and world health. This resulted in a diverse programme highlighting cross-cutting perspectives on the role of music in and beyond clinical settings. The programme included 4 keynote speakers, 3 round table discussions, 38 oral papers, 15 poster presentations, 8 workshops, 8 Special Interest Groups (SIGs), 2 plenary sessions, 4 Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions, as well as a pre-conference Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) training. The topics centered around medical applications of music and its scientific underpinnings including, but not limited to: contemporary and innovative medical applications of music in all specialties; musical responses to multicultural issues and health disparities; music in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; and technological advances in music and medicine research. To see the full programme and explore the abstracts please visit the Content Library (7th International Conference of the International Association for Music and Medicine, 2022).



Photograph 2: Keynote and invited speakers

Pre-conference training in NICU music therapy

The pre-conference training in NICU music therapy, “First Sounds: Rhythm, Breath, and Lullaby – Tier I”, took place on May 27, 2022, at the Helena Venizelou Hospital. The training was led by an integrative team consisting of prominent music therapists Joanne Loewy and Andrew Rossetti, neonatologist Aimee Telsey, and NICU nurse practitioner Ann-Marie Dassler, chaired by the Greek NICU music therapist Faiy Evaggelou. To meet Tier I competency, participants were provided with theoretical and hands-on experience in the areas of environmental music therapy, trauma training in music psychotherapy with caregivers, and evidence-based live music therapy interventions for premature infants.

In-person conference at Athens Conservatory

The in-person conference offered four highly diverse and thought-provoking keynote presentations. Athanasios Dritsas, a Greek cardiologist, musician and IAMM’s Athens Scientific Committee President, opened the conference by discussing the link between music and health in the context of exercise and sport sciences. His presentation was followed by back-to-back lectures delivered by international speakers. The first day ended with John Ioannidis’s keynote “Meta-Analytic Approach on Music Therapy & Music Medicine Research Studies”, during which he discussed current challenges regarding reproducibility and transparency of scientific research

and its relevance to music medicine. As a Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology and Population Health at Stanford University, Ioannidis offered valuable insights on how to improve the integrity of scientific investigations and encouraged music therapists and music medicine researchers to engage in meta-research.

The second day of the conference began with Joanne Loewy's stimulating talk on the integrative mechanisms of music and music therapy in medicine. The lecture drew from Loewy's decades of experience working as a music therapist, researcher and educator alongside medical and psychosocial milieu teams and reminded us of the integral ways that music connects our mind, body, and spirit. Personally, this was one of those lectures that stays with you long after the conference and shapes how you perceive and approach certain clinical and research questions in your work. Lastly, a Cambridge Mathematics Professor, Athanassios Fokas, delivered the final keynote focusing on the interplay between the unconscious and conscious processes and its connections to musical experiences.

Equally diverse topics were explored during three round table discussions related to Biology and Psychoanalysis on Music; Cosmic Harmony, Creation and Art; and Music and Brain Studies on Newborns. From Johannes Kepler's harmony of spheres to transferential and counter-transferential responses in therapeutic process and multimodal neuroimaging methods, the speakers offered innovative perspectives on the use of music to promote wellbeing across cultures. The diversity of topics afforded and fostered interdisciplinary discussions on how to collaboratively move forward.

Online conference

During IAMM's online conference, between May 30 and June 3, 2022, some of the presentations were pre-recorded and some were delivered in real time to offer maximum flexibility for both the presenters and attendees who were joining from around the world. There were 8 workshops and 8 SIGs in addition to oral and poster presentations. Each SIG involved a network of experts who worked collaboratively for over a year and presented their findings in a 90-minute presentation that was followed by open discussion and audience Q&A. SIGs were multidisciplinary in nature, consisting of music therapists, medical professionals, researchers, educators, and musicians from across the globe who shared international perspectives on a specific topic including: Evidence Based Practices for Telehealth Music and Psychotherapy Services; Music Therapy and Chronic Pain; MIND – The Music and Intercultural Neurodiversity SIG; Global Perspectives on Assessments in Music Therapy Practice; Music Therapy in the Context of Dementia: Advocating for its Recognition; Community Music Pedagogies and Engagements in Healthcare: Education and Advocacy; Music Therapy and Music-Based Interventions for Movement Disorders; and The Arts Continuum for Resilience-Building Across the Trauma Spectrum. The speakers offered a comprehensive overview of each topic by synthesising emerging and developing evidence, discussing theoretical and methodological issues to be addressed in future studies, and providing the attendees with clinically relevant recommendations.

From my own experience as a member of a SIG led by Amy Clements-Cortés, the collaborative process that preceded the conference was a tremendous learning opportunity and a space for exploration that ultimately resulted in the Gestalt effect, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. I hope the SIG format is here to stay.

CONCLUSION

The 7th IAMM conference offered a stimulating blend of scientific and clinical input, reminding us of the ancient roots of music and medicine while being future-oriented. Organising a hybrid conference reflected the latter as it required inventiveness and brave leadership. Congratulations to the members of IAMM's Organising and Scientific Committee, and the Board of Directors, for their resilience during these unprecedented times.

Those seeking inspiration have not been disappointed. I invite you to review the remarkable programme from this year's conference (<https://iammonline.com/iamm2022library/>) and to start preparing for the upcoming event in 2024!

REFERENCES

7th International Conference of the International Association for Music and Medicine (2022). Content Library. Retrieved from <https://iammonline.com/iamm2022library/>