

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 1st International Conference on Children's Music Therapy: "Health for Children with Music"

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CONFERENCE DETAILS

The 1st International Conference on Children's Music Therapy
"Health for Children with Music"
26-27 April 2022, Helsinki, Finland

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Victoria Kammin has over 20 years of clinical experience as a music therapist working with children and adults with disabilities in special education, the National Health Service (NHS) and residential care settings. She specialises in children's palliative care and is undertaking her PhD in this clinical area at the Martin House Research Centre at the University of York. She was a Senior Lecturer on the MA music therapy programme at the University of Roehampton for eight years; an external examiner for the University of South Wales MA music therapy programme; the Director of Resonance Creative Therapy; the Children, Young People and their Families (CYPF) network coordinator for the British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) and works closely with the charity Jessie's Fund. [vlvk500@york.ac.uk]

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INTRODUCTION

This conference was the first international conference on children's music therapy named 'Health for Children with Music' with the theme of 'Music Therapy in Paediatric Hospitals' on the first day followed by 'Music Therapy in Child Psychiatry' on the second and final day. The New Children's Hospital in Helsinki provided the inspiration for this conference, inviting students, researchers and professionals from all around the world to discuss the potential of music therapy and music to contribute to the mental and somatic recovery of children.

There were a mixture of paper presentations, roundtables, workshops and poster presentations reflecting a diverse range of clinical work, research and interdisciplinary collaborations, with speakers and participants from 27 different countries. The conference offered an in-person programme and a library programme which allowed those who were unable to or unsure about travelling post-pandemic the opportunity to record their presentations for delegates to access online at a later date. This made for an accessible conference, providing an alternative to hybrid conferences which have, more recently, been running during and post-pandemic. The in-person format fostered face-to-face interaction and engagement, while the library programme allowed participants to engage with the conference presentations in their own time and place.

This vibrant conference took place in the beautiful Scandic Marina Conference Centre in Helsinki, Finland, with incredible panoramic views of the sea as the backdrop. As the first conference that many delegates had participated in post-pandemic, there was a palpable sense of excitement to be in the same room as other music therapists, professionals and students to partake in the live presentations, lively discussions and networking

opportunities. This first face-to-face meeting for many was taken seriously with a nurturing and warm environment, attention to aesthetics and delicious meals and refreshments. The atmosphere was enhanced by a plethora of live and recorded musical examples embedded in the different presentations and workshops and performances by children, parents and babies from Finnish music institutes. The conference concluded with 'The Magic Hot Air Balloon' composed by Ilan Sanfi and performed by the Symphony Orchestra of the Lansi Uusimaa Music Institute. Ilan Sanfi is a researcher, music therapist and musician who composed 'The Magic Hot Air Balloon' as a music and imagery journey.

The first day entitled 'Music Therapy in Paediatric Hospitals' showcased cutting-edge neonatal care work alongside research on pain management. These are both important contemporary areas of development in our profession. It was heartening to see so many presentations that considered the needs of the whole family including siblings as well as work within the community such as Monika Overa's insightful presentation on a scoping review of music therapy in palliative care in hospital-at-home settings. I very much enjoyed the mix of extremely established names in music therapy (Friederike B. Haslbeck, Minna Huotilainen and Cheryl Dileo) presenting at the keynote sessions, early career colleagues presenting innovative practice and other professionals using music creatively in this clinical area: for example, the interactive and engaging workshop on The Laulau Song drawing method by Minna Lappalainen.

The second day, themed 'Music Therapy in Child Psychiatry', opened with creative and inspiring keynote sessions from Gro Trondalen, Research Director Mari Tervaniemi and Karin Schumacher. The rest of the day comprised of presentations about clinical work from early childhood to adolescence. The focus on trauma felt particularly important and poignant with the war in Ukraine and the impact of the pandemic still so raw for delegates. The live and recorded music and opportunities for face-to-face contact, sharing, interactions and discussions provided a welcome, containing space to reflect on and process responses to trauma both personally and clinically. I attended the closing workshop on using words when working with parents in music therapy which provided a useful opportunity for role-play, verbal interaction and sharing of ideas.

It was exciting to witness the innovative music therapy and musical work with children taking place in Finland and around the world. There was a strong sense of being welcomed by Finnish music therapists into their practice and culture as well as a coming together of eclectic practice from around the world with much in common and much to share. It was refreshing to have a conference entirely focused on health for children with music and highlighted the need for similar conferences in the future. I look forward for more to come, to visit the beautiful city of Helsinki again and to nurture and foster new connections.