



Special feature

Music therapy: A profession for the future

Why music? Why and when is a music therapist needed?

Lectures and reflections from the international symposium
Aalborg University, Denmark, 15 April 2016

Guest editor: Inge Nygaard Pedersen

This special feature is a series of papers from a symposium held on 15th April 2016 at Aalborg University, Denmark on the topic: *'Music therapy: A profession for the future'*. The two core questions listed in the title: *'Why music? Why and when is a music therapist needed?'* were the vehicle of the day for both the lectures presented on the symposium day and for the following discussions among the participants.

All together 15 authors have contributed from five universities: Aalborg University (Denmark), University of Melbourne (Australia), Anglia Ruskin University (United Kingdom), University of Bergen (Norway) and University of Oslo (Norway). The special feature brings worked-through reflexive introductions, lectures and reflection papers in three parts, where each part is related to one of the three populations chosen for the roundtables on the symposium.

The organisers of the symposium wondered if common answers to the two core questions in the profession of music therapy would emerge at an international base during the day, or if multiple ideas and subjective answers to the questions would come up.

As the contributions show, it is mostly multiple ideas; yet with regard to case material, the way of carrying out music therapy in a relationship with the users of music therapy is very similar. The theoretical understanding and ideological positions are different. There still seems to be, however, a growing integration of theories and ideas by many presenters and discussion partners, and there seems to be an interest in finding overlapping concepts in the field that can clarify and simplify the dissemination of information relating to the music therapy profession.

Publication history: Submitted 22 April 2017; First published 30 September 2017.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Inge Nygaard Pedersen

Aalborg University, Denmark

Structure of the symposium

The symposium at Aalborg University held on 15th April 2016 was structured in three roundtables, where the two core questions 'Why music?' and 'Why and when is a music therapist needed?' were in focus. These questions created the basis for lectures and discussions concerning 1) music therapy in mental health, 2) music therapy in dementia care and neuro-rehabilitation, and 3) music therapy in the area of attachment/communication and developmental problems for children, adolescents and families.

Each roundtable included three lecture presenters, three discussion partners and one moderator. Each lecture was limited to 15 minutes and the discussion time for the three discussion partners and the presenters had a time limit of 55 minutes with the last ten minutes reserved for the audience questions and comments.

The presenters at roundtable 1 were Inge Nygaard Pedersen (Denmark), Denise Grocke (Australia) and Jos De Backer (Belgium). The discussion partners were Helen Odell-Miller (United Kingdom), Charlotte Lindvang (Denmark) and Sanne Storm (Faroe Islands). The moderator was Niels Hannibal (Denmark).

The presenters at roundtable 2 were Hanne Mette Ridder (Denmark), Helen Odell-Miller (United Kingdom) and Wolfgang Schmid (Norway). The discussion partners were Bolette Daniels Beck (Denmark), Jörg Fachner (United Kingdom) and Cheryl Dileo (USA). The moderator was Brynjulf Stige (Norway).

The presenters at roundtable 3 were Stine Lindahl Jacobsen (Denmark), Katrina McFerran (Australia) and Gro Trondalen (Norway). The discussion partners were Ulla Holck (Denmark), Karette Stensæth (Norway) and Helen Loth (United Kingdom). The moderator was Cheryl Dileo (USA).

Not all presenters chose to submit their paper for this special feature.

Topic of the symposium

Niels Hannibal from Aalborg University suggested the topic for the day. His colleagues, Hanne Mette Ridder and I, agreed and planned for this targeted focus for the symposium. We had participated in a similar symposium at Temple University, USA on 10th April 2015 with the title 'Envisioning the Future of Music Therapy' where we listened to how research has given a foundation for the future of music therapy. From that perspective, the future looked promising (Dileo 2016). All three of us wondered if common answers to the two core questions in the profession of music therapy would emerge at an international base during the day, or if multiple ideas and subjective answers to the questions would come up.

As the contributions show, it is mostly multiple ideas; yet with regard to case material, the way of carrying out music therapy in a relationship with the users of music therapy is very similar. The theoretical understanding and ideological positions are different. There still seems to be, however, a growing integration of theories and ideas by many presenters and discussion partners, and there seems to be an interest in finding overlapping concepts in the field that can clarify and simplify the dissemination of the valuable profession of music therapy.

Structure of the special feature

All together 15 participants have contributed to this special feature including eight presenters. The special feature, as mentioned above, is presented in three parts following the topics of each roundtable.

In line with the open-ended, reflective and unfolding nature of the symposium, each contributor was invited to organise their contribution as it seemed appropriate to them without having to follow a pre-defined structure. Furthermore, this openness hopefully helps to show the multiple ideas around the two questions by the lecture presenters, discussion partners and moderators.

This special feature concludes with a postlude by Lars Ole Bonde (Denmark), who took notes during the day. In an attempt to give an overview of the symposium, the postlude brings together the main ideas explored in the symposium in response to the core questions 'Why music?' and 'Why and when is a music therapist needed?'.

References

Dileo, C. (Ed.). (2016). *Envisioning the future of music therapy*. PA: Temple University. Retrieved from http://www.temple.edu/boyer/academicprograms/music-therapy/documents/ENVISIONING_THE_FUTURE.pdf