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Vol 4(2), July 1, 2004
mi40004000151

Report of the 5th International Symposium for Qualitative Music Therapy Research International Music Therapy Institute Universität der Künste, Berlin

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Introduction

Thank you for inviting me to submit a report of the symposium held in April 2004. I am grateful for the opportunity to present an overview of the meeting. Of course there are many perspectives to this experience of which mine is just one. Rather than share my own experience of the event in a more personal way, I would like to give some practical information in this report so that people who were not present can have access to details of what happened in terms of structure of the meeting and the participants involved. Questions about other dimensions can be addressed to any of the Scientific Board members for clarification.

Venues for the Symposium

The *5th International Symposium for Qualitative Music Therapy Research* of the International Music Therapy Institute of the UdK was held from April 21-26, this year. A group of 23 music therapists from ten different countries met at Gutshof Sauen, in the Brandenburg region. Gutshof Sauen is owned by the UdK and other Berlin colleges of the arts and has been specifically established for use by such meetings. The house was originally the home of Prof. Dr August Bier, a surgeon of the Charite in Berlin. His grave is in the woods around the house. A beautiful garden, and lovely woods surround the house, which has a quiet and restful atmosphere well suited for our symposium gathering.

At the end of the meeting time in Sauen, the group returned to Berlin to give to a public presentation at the UdK on April 26th, welcomed warmly by the Dean of Music and the Vice President of the University, Professor Dr. Patrick Dinslage followed by an introduction to the presentation by Professor Dr. Mechtild Jahn-Langenberg^[1]. The presentation was well attended, with a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere. It was followed by an event to open the Faculty of Music for 2004 where the work of the International Music Therapy Institute (IMB) was highlighted. We are grateful for the generous reception that followed and the opportunity it provided to meet faculty members from the UdK.

The Symposium

The meeting continues a tradition of such gatherings since 1994. The current Scientific Board of the IMB comprises Mechtild Jahn-Langenberg (IMB Director), Kenneth Aigen, Carolyn Kenny, Dorit Amir and Barbara Wheeler. This group planned the symposium and decided the invitations for participants. Since it is not possible to invite every person involved in qualitative research in music therapy, the Board is responsible to create a group that can work effectively together, involving a larger number of experienced qualitative researchers with a smaller number of academics and graduate students who can benefit from the contact with the group. The Scientific Board members are due sincere thanks for their efforts in developing this group. In

addition, the scientific assistant at the UdK, Hedwig Koch-Temming, undertook a large part of the organisational work for the symposium. She was also a participant in the programme, and we enjoyed and appreciated her great efforts to keep everything running smoothly in the lead up to the event as well as on a day-to-day basis when we were there.

The funding for attendance at the symposium was provided partly by the participants in terms of airfares and the costs of staying in Berlin, however the Faculty of Music at the UdK generously provided all of the funding for the accommodation and meals at Gusthof Sauen and the transport to and from Berlin. The support for the IMB from the Faculty of Music is impressive and has been much appreciated by the group participants.

The structure of the symposium was decided by members of the Scientific Board and was advised to the participants before they arrived. Therefore this structure held together the work of the group over the days in Sauen. There were plenary sessions involving the total group, as well as meetings in four smaller sub-groups. The four plenary sessions of the total group focussed on a number of topics including; *Collaborating with clinicians*, *Connecting with other academic disciplines*, an open session, and a reporting session where each of the small groups made a short report to the larger group for discussion and feedback. While some days involved quite hard work in terms of discussions in the small groups, reading materials and other preparations, and sometimes rushing to have a presentation or idea ready for the small or large group discussion, there was a more relaxed atmosphere in the evenings with singing, music and dancing filling our nights with fun and sociability. Many gifts and talents of the group members were demonstrated in this music making, showing music therapy to have a rich pool of talented and skilled professionals, and giving the group another way of interrelating and learning about each other.

The Working Groups

The work and focus of the four small groups are described below. Some members who were invited could not come and so only those who were present have been included in this report. Each of the small groups made preparations before attending the symposium. Some groups focussed on reading as preparation while others shared musical materials or prepared presentations to their small group.

The *Arts-Based Research* group focussed on the role of the arts in doing qualitative research in music therapy. The group tried out, experienced and discussed issues related to arts based forms, approaches and techniques which are used as research methods in music therapy for collecting, describing and analysing data, as well as vehicles for presenting research results. These included music, movement, story telling, poetry, art, play and other forms. The group members were Dorit Amir (Chair), Michele Forinash, Diane Austin, Rosemarie Tüpker and Jackie Robarts.

The *Qualitative Methodology in Context* group focussed on issues surrounding the use of qualitative methodology in music therapy research. The interests and concerns of the group members determined the direction and focus of discussions in each session. The roots of research philosophy that provides the basis for the choice of methodology for music therapy research was examined, and reasons for selecting one methodology over another was discussed through comparing published research studies. The group members were Barbara Wheeler (Chair), Mechtild Jahn-Langenberg, Trygve Aasgard, Jörg Frommer, Henk Smeijsters and Jane Edwards.

The *Music and Culture* group discussed music and music making within the construct of "culture". This group gave consideration to many questions that relate to the various social contexts in which music is engaged, and examined how they relate to theory and qualitative research in music therapy. Since for many years a majority of music therapy researchers have been attached to research practices characteristic of psychology and medicine, the *Music and Culture* group considered the value of philosophical and methodological ideas from fields such as anthropology, ethnomusicology, religious studies, and cultural studies. Group members were Carolyn Kenny & Kenneth Aigen (Chairs), Gary Ansdell, Hedwig Koch-Temming, Randi Rolvsjord, Satomi Kondo.

The Musical Analysis in Qualitative Research group considered the role of music in the therapeutic process in music therapy. This group focussed on how musical elements of music therapy processes in our qualitative research projects are analysed, and how these meanings are represented, in an effort to elaborate an understanding of music therapy with diverse patient and client populations. Group members were Colin Lee (Chair), Denise Grocke, Alan Turry, Eckhard Weymann, Simon Procter and Peter Hoffmann.

It is also noted that the Mechtild Jahn-Langenberg's student assistant, Claudia Kaminski, attended the symposium recording many of the sessions and being generally available in a support role for the group.

Conclusion

The *5th International Symposium for Qualitative Music Therapy Research* provided a rich and fertile ground for sowing new seeds (an image put forward by the Music and Culture group in their public presentation at the UdK). These seeds become plants that grow into the future of our field of music therapy, rooted in our past but inclining towards the light of new knowledge and potential.

This regular international meeting is important because it gives an opportunity for professionals to form new links with each other, or to consolidate their existing connections. The symposium helps very busy researchers to gain some time for reflection and even much needed inspiration for their work. Such meetings are not possible without the generous funding support provided by the UdK. This meeting also cannot work well without the work of the Scientific Board of the IMB in giving consideration to the invitations to researchers, as well as their care in providing the structure and development of the programme. In addition, it is the willingness for co-operation between the group members that brings the group into close and meaningful contact both personally and professionally, forming and developing ideas together within an atmosphere of tolerance for debate and critique. It should not be thought that the symposium seeks to promote one big idea about research, or has an agenda in relation to deciding acceptability of new work in qualitative research. Rather, the group is open to developments, seeks new challenges, and tries to find a balance between the uncertainty that characterises, and indeed is necessary for some aspects of qualitative research inquiry, with the rigour required of good research practice.

Notes

[1] Please note that professional titles will not be used for the remainder of the report.

To cite this page:

Edwards, Jane (2004). Report of the 5th International Symposium for Qualitative Music Therapy Research International Music Therapy Institute Universität der Künste, Berlin. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*. Retrieved from <http://www.voices.no/mainissues/mi40003000151.html>

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