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Vol 1(1), April 20, 2001
mitext11summer

An Historical Perspective: Humble Beginnings

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The decision to initiate music therapy's first international publication occurred at the conclusion of the 1982 international symposium, "Music in the Life of Man" held at New York University. The newsletter's first selected editor, Ken Bruscia of the American Association for Music Therapy published the first volume of the International Newsletter of Music Therapy in 1983. He described its beginning:



"All too soon, everyone went home, summer vacations ended, and September began in panic. Now that we have a newsletter, who is supposed to communicate what to whom? And what am I doing in the middle? Why hadn't anyone submitted anything to put in it? Having a vehicle for communication but nothing to say reminded me of Thomas Edison. When his invention the telephone actually worked for the first time, he became utterly speechless and nervously began to sing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into the receiver" (International Newsletter of Music Therapy, 1983, p.1).

Bruscia decided upon his initial mission: to initiate a global communication network for music therapy. However, in order to accomplish this far-reaching goal he had to begin simply, and with the basics, which meant publishing basic information (organization titles and addresses, current conferences, number of practicing music therapists and training programs). Volume One consisted of thirty-five pages of compiled information and statistics from approximately twenty countries.

Over the years, the international newsletter published by the American Association for Music Therapy gradually grew into the Music Therapy International Report. In Volume 7 (1990), co-editors Amelia Oldfield from the Association of Professional Music Therapists (APMT) of Great Britain and I, from AAMT, explained, "We watched as our publication grew out of its previous title. . . the new title is reflective of the increased depth and breadth of international work in the music therapy field since the publication's birth in 1983 (1990-91, p. 1)." Although the international report kept Bruscia's initial goal, it also grew beyond its early mission. In 1990 the American Association for Music Therapy agreed on an expanded mission statement for the Music Therapy International Report: to encourage awareness and knowledge (within the music therapy field) of music therapy throughout the world (Summer, Report to AAMT Executive Board, p. 1, 1990).

Subsequent issues of the international report developed a particular focus upon understanding the relationship between a country's culture and its music therapy field. Thus, what began to emerge in the publication's later issues were reports from leaders in the music therapy field of culture-driven descriptions of music therapy clinical practice, training, and research. The character of this publication was growing beyond simple reporting. It was beginning to establish relationships between music therapy in different countries, and was becoming more akin to a journal than a report. Despite its successful development, the American Association for Music Therapy did not have the means to properly disseminate the publication internationally. Therefore, in 1998, the two American music therapy associations unified, we recommended that a search begin for a new home base for the Music Therapy International Report. The last issue of the Music Therapy International Report was Volume 10, published in 1996. Now, Bruscia's dilemma of having a vehicle with nothing to say was turned on its head because after ten volumes of the international report there was much to communicate, but now there was no vehicle for expression.

The Music Therapy International Report was accomplished with much hard work from the American Association of Music Therapy, its editors and authors. In the 1980's there was no possibility of sending articles by fax, by computer disk, or by e-mail. Even in the 1990's our main forms of communication were regular mail and telephone. Now this journal promises an expansion of the dimensions and mission of the former international report. The birth of this online journal is made possible because of the dedication of its editors, and their clarity of vision. The dialogues between Carolyn Kenny and Brynjulf Stige and among the editors have given birth to this significant milestone in the development of an international music therapy network. But this journal is designed to be a creative group venture, and it calls for a commitment of support from music therapists on each continent. To my colleagues in North America, I want to encourage you to contribute to this journal. Our continent includes Canada, the United States, Mexico and Central America. There are so many music therapy developments transpiring in each of our countries that should be made available internationally. I hope that you will be inspired to submit entries and articles to the journal. And I hope that those who are more technically adept on the Internet will help those who are less familiar with the Internet. With support, it will be easy to contribute to this journal because of the accessibility and immediacy of the Internet. What used to take days of time and effort can now be communicated internationally in a short session at a computer. I encourage you to communicate with the journal editors and to participate in the development of this exciting journal. I am honored to pen this article for this first issue of the journal. I will look forward to the naming of a North American editor in the near future. I plan to contribute and to dialogue with my international colleagues; I hope you will, as well.

To cite this page:

Summer, Lisa (2005). An Historical Perspective: Humble Beginnings. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*. Retrieved from <http://www.voices.no/mainissues/mitext11summer.html>

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