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# 30 Amazing Years of the WFMT

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## Abstract

In this issue of *Music Therapy Today*, I have chosen to write about the history and contributions the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) has made to grow the global awareness of music therapy as an art and science. This paper will provide readers with a brief history of the WFMT by highlighting its purpose, organization and important events from the past 30 years. Further information on projects undertaken by WFMT officers from 2011 forward will also be highlighted.

**Keywords:** WFMT, development, history.

## Resumen

*En este número de Music Therapy Today, he decidido escribir sobre la historia y las aportaciones de la World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT), las cuales han dado lugar a una mayor conciencia global sobre la musicoterapia como arte y ciencia. En este trabajo los lectores podrán conocer una breve historia de la WFMT en la que se pone de relieve su finalidad, organización y eventos importantes de los últimos 30 años. También se resaltarán informaciones adicionales sobre los proyectos emprendidos por los representantes de la WFMT desde el año 2011.*

**Palabras clave:** WFMT, desarrollo, historia.

## Introduction

The growth of music therapy across the world has been exponential over the last 30 years, resulting in an increasing number of music therapists in an ever growing number of countries. This progression and expansion of music therapy, however, has not occurred without challenges and needs. To help support these growing tasks and needs, the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) was officially established in 1985 in Genoa, Italy as a result of international music therapists' shared vision to promote the profession globally. To meet the requisites of an ever growing complex group of professionals, the

WFMT has itself flourished and developed into a group of music therapists who represent all major regions of the world. The ten founding members were Rolando Benenzon (Argentina), Giovanna Mutti (Italy), Jacques Jost (France), Barbara Hesser (USA), Amelia Oldfield (UK), Ruth Bright (Australia), Heinrich Otto Moll (Germany), Rafael Colon (Puerto Rico), Clementina Nastari (Brazil), and Tadeusz Natanson (Poland).

The WFMT is an organization "dedicated to developing and promoting music therapy throughout the world as an art and science. The Federation supports the global development of educational programs, clinical prac-

tice, and research to demonstrate the contributions of music therapy to humanity” (WFMT, 2015). The WFMT acts as an umbrella organization that encourages the exchange of knowledge related to advancing music therapy clinical practice standards, accreditation and licensing, education and training, research and ethics; as well as international collaborations. Further outreach is provided by the Global Crisis commission, part of whose mandate is to offer assistance to communities affected by disasters.

The WFMT Council is comprised of the WFMT Officers, Commissioners and Regional Liaisons. Officers include: the President, Past-President, Secretary/Treasurer, Executive Assistant and Assembly of Student Delegates. There are eight Commissions including: Accreditation and Certification, Clinical Practice, Education and Training, Global Crisis, Publications, Public Relations, Research and Ethics, World Congress Organizer. Further, the WFMT has appointed eight Regional Liaisons to represent its members in the eight global regions of the world.

### Important Events from the Past 30 Years

Some of the most important events from the past 30 years surround the world congresses which have taken place in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Italy, Puerto Rico, Spain, Korea, and the USA. The establishment of scholarships and awards for music therapists is another highlight of the WFMT. The WFMT student scholarship to attend the WFMT world congress is offered to both undergraduate and graduate music therapy students, as well as interns who are active members of their country’s student organizations and have shown interest in the WFMT and global music therapy. The WFMT Recognition Program was established in April 2011, to extend be-

yond the WFMT Lifetime Membership Award. This program was put into place to honor significant contributions in education, practice, and research of music therapists around the world. The awards include: research/special projects; service award; advocate of music therapy; and clinical impact award; and are presented every 3 years at the WFMT world congress. Honorary life members awarded to date have been given to: Dr. Rolando Benenzon, 2008; Dr. David Aldridge, 2011; and Dr. Ruth Bright, 2014.

### Projects Undertaken by the WFMT 2011-present

The WFMT has been working on a number of projects in order to create resources for the global music therapy community. Below are some highlights of tasks that are contributing to the development of music therapy practice.

### WFMT Strategic Planning and Looking Ahead

The WFMT engaged in an 18 month strategic planning process from January 2013 to July 2014. This task was undertaken to assess the strengths of our organization, the current and future needs, areas for improvement and sustainability of the WFMT, and the identification of priority projects and resources. In this volume of *Music Therapy Today* there is an article [Advancing the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT): Strategic planning process], which provides detail on this planning process. Please refer to that paper for further information. Of significance in preparing this “road map” was the identification of broad goal areas such as: Information; Revenue, Visibility and Collaborations; Internal Communications; Accountability; and Volunteering with which the planning group and council will work to accomplish further goals

and objectives housed in each wide-ranging area.

### **WFMT Guidelines and Policies**

The WFMT has a number of guidelines and policies that are resources for all WFMT members. These documents are available on the WFMT website <http://www.wfmt.info/resource-centers/publication-center/> and are especially useful to new music therapy organizations, and professionals in countries that do not have an organization, or formalized professional body to seek information on professional practices. Here music therapists can find information on the *WFMT Bylaws and Constitution*, as well as resources such as *Introduction to Ethical Practice, Ethics and Informed Consent Requirements for Music Therapy Research, and Internet and Privacy Issues*.

### **WFMT Regional Liaisons Fact Sheets**

Information on the prominence of music therapy in all eight global regions of the WFMT are prepared by the WFMT Regional Liaisons. Fact pages and videos have been created and are updated annually by each liaison for the WFMT website. Fact sheets provide information on education and training, professional organizations, and statistics on music therapists working in the various regions.

### **Assembly of Student Delegates Window to the World**

The WFMT is motivated to inspire the next generation of music therapists and encourages global student interactions. The Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD) stimulates knowledge exchange among students by nurturing global involvement and awareness of WFMT. The ASD takes on a variety of projects in their respective three year terms. One noteworthy initiative is the *Window to the*

*World* project, which includes stories on meaningful music therapy experiences from students studying, working or traveling. These exciting stories can be found at <http://www.wfmt.info/wfmt-for-students/window-to-the-world/>

### **WFMT International Internship Registry**

The purpose of the WFMT internship registry is to create and cultivate a list of probable internships for music therapists in all WFMT regions. Presently, there are internships listed in Australia, Canada, Singapore and the United States. The creation of this resource was inspired by students seeking the opportunity to develop their clinical skills in locations around the world. Navigating an international internship is complicated with respect to affiliation agreements, educational equivalencies and insurance, but it is possible. This registry provides the preliminary position for students to begin their process. The registry can be found at the following link: <http://www.wfmt.info/international-internship-registry/>

At the World Congress in Austria, 2014, in Vienna, a special one day pre conference workshop on “*Studying, Interning, and Working Abroad: Preparing for Global Engagement*” was organized by the ASD and offered to students. As one of my passions is education and internship I was pleased to participate as a speaker. The workshop which had well over 120 persons in attendance further confirmed the growing desire and trend of students wanting to study abroad and the importance of the WFMT in creating resources to assist.

### **WFMT Education Center**

The WFMT Education Center provides resources to promote knowledge exchange

with respect to music therapy approaches, clinical practice and research in an effort to inform and instruct the global community on music therapy. These resources are intended to promote and continue the development of the practice of music therapy in all regions of the world.

### ***Music Therapy Today Journal***

The WFMT *Music Therapy Today* publication is an online open access peer reviewed journal whose mission from 2014 forward is to prepare two journals each year. Submissions are accepted and encouraged from persons from a variety of disciplines throughout the year. In the past this publication has featured world congress proceedings and will be further developed as an International resource to include articles on clinical music therapy practice, research and education and training.

### ***WFMT International Library of Music***

The International library of music project was initiated by the WFMT Practice Commission, in an effort to develop a media library of popular songs, rhythms, and music that are commonly used in all regions of the WFMT. This resource is an important contribution to clinical practice, as therapists find themselves working with clients or patients from a wide variety of cultures, speaking unfamiliar languages. At present, the library contains lists of songs and rhythms from each region further linked to iTunes, audio and video files, in order to assist therapists in choosing and learning appropriate music for therapy sessions. The library contains lullabies, folk, popular music and rhythms. The library is an ongoing project for the WFMT with the intention that new categories will be added while current resources are updated.

### ***WFMT Folk Music Project***

In 2011, in my role as the WFMT Clinical Commissioner I undertook a new project with Commissioner, member Claudio Cominardi which involved securing authors from around the world to contribute a paper on folk music in their countries and regions. The purpose of this resource is to add to the library of music on the WFMT website by also offering writings about music genres. These papers and the music examples are hoped to stimulate advanced awareness of musical cultures, as well as the clinical approaches for music therapy. From the beginning work several papers were submitted, approved through peer review and edited. Dr. Daniel Teague who is in the current WFMT Clinical Commissioner is pleased to further develop these resources. Specific submission guidelines are provided at the following link: <http://www.wfmt.info/folk-music/>

### ***WFMT Soundboard***

The WFMT Soundboard invites music therapists in all regions to submit sound clips of therapeutic moments in order for listeners to learn and understand how music is used in various traditions and cultures around the world. These clips also provide insight into music therapy approaches and techniques with various populations and how they compare and or differ from country to country. I was moved to submit a sound clip of my work with a client in palliative care who wrote a song for her husband to facilitate relationship completion. I encourage our members to consider adding to this resource.

### ***WFMT and Social Media***

The WFMT has an active presence on several social media platforms including: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The WFMT Facebook

group is a large and active group, with new members added on a daily basis. These platforms allow the WFMT to communicate in the “moment” with members on new resources and important music therapy resources and topics for discussion. Further the WFMT maintains a Global Event Calendar on the website which welcomes submissions from all our members.

### Concluding Thoughts

As the WFMT marks their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015, I am honoured to be serving as the current President. I feel blessed to be in this role

and to watch, witness and contribute to the International growth of music therapy. **The discipline of music therapy will continue to flourish when projects such as the ones presented above continue to be developed.** Please consider reviewing the many resources available on the WFMT website, learning more about the history of the WFMT, and suggesting what is needed for the next 30 years.

### Reference

World Federation of Music Therapy. (2015). <http://www.wfmt.info/>



### About the Author

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