

EDITORIAL by the Danish Journal of Music Therapy

Every morning of the Nordic Music Therapy Conference, the organising committee evoked high spirits in the participants by a vivid introduction to the day's programme, live music and community singing, humorous sketches of the "holy cows" in music therapy literature, and thought-provoking and moving poetic quotations about the relationships between nature and human beings.

A prominent theme of the conference was the encouragement to face the present ecological and political crisis in the world by employing music and music therapy to promote health, regeneration and resilience in clients as well as therapists.

The conference programme was comprehensive, and every day the participants could choose between nine tracks of paper presentations, workshops, symposia and roundtables. Thus, they could benefit from a selection of activities, but not from the other simultaneous activities. Favourably, the present collection of abstracts offers information about the complete contents of the conference, permitting insight in a rich variety of projects, ideas, experiences, methods, achievements, theories and references. It is amazing to scan this multi-faceted display of the current music therapy field and to feel joy in acknowledging the growing worldwide activity.

The online publication of the present abstracts permits easy selection of contributions by searching for themes, names or keywords. However, it may be tempting and rewarding to spend a few hours scrolling down the whole collection with curiosity and critical interest. Many thanks to the hard-working organising committee for providing access to this rich source of information, experience and engagement!

Erik Christensen

on behalf of the editorial board of the Danish Journal of Music Therapy

The Danish Journal of Music Therapy (Tidsskriftet Dansk Musikterapi) is published in Danish language twice a year in print and online.

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EDITORIAL by the guest editors: Facing the music or music for escapism

Hanne Mette Ridder and Stine Lindahl Jacobsen

The 11th Nordic Music Therapy Conference was held June 2024 in Musikkens Hus (House of Music) in the centre of Aalborg, Denmark. It was hosted by the Music Therapy faculty and students with the following local organisers: Bolette Beck, Charlotte Lindvang, Gustavo Gattino, Jens Anderson-Ingstrup, Morten Kattenhøj, Niels Hannibal and Ulla Holck and with Stine as organising chair and Hanne Mette as scientific chair. We were thrilled to receive hundreds of abstracts and to welcome 291 participants, with most participating live – face to face – and a dozen watching selected presentations online. Although a Nordic conference, it was overwhelmingly well-attended from all over the world. All neighbouring countries to Denmark were represented, but also countries from other continents. In Figure 1, countries with more than five participants are shown, and apart from these, there were participants from Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Faeroe Islands, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and Thailand.

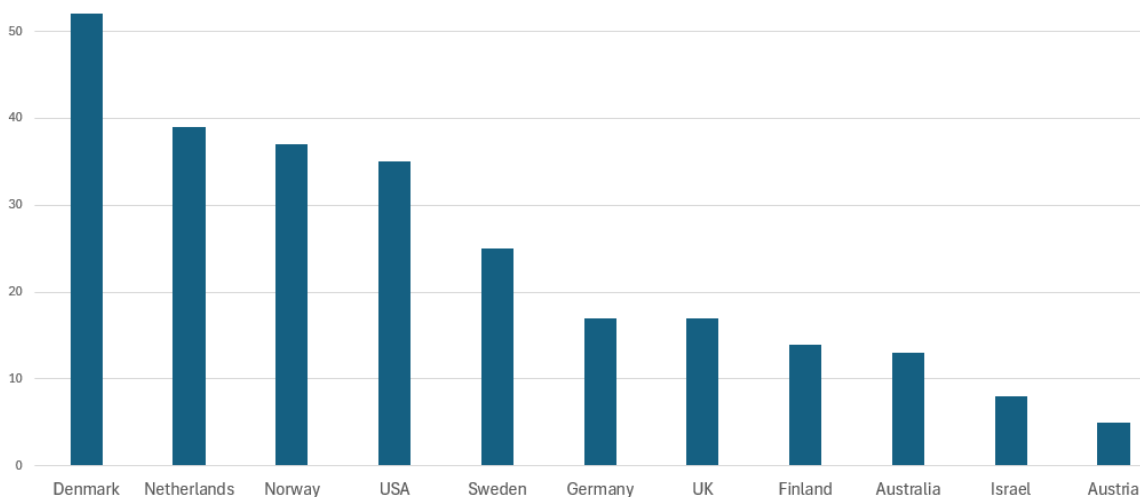


Figure 1. Countries with more than five participants at the NMTC24.

We certainly enjoyed planning the NMTC24 and to invite colleagues to come – not only for a visit, but also to share and exchange ideas, knowledge and research. We managed to keep the deadlines although there was only a two-year time span from the 10th NMTC which was delayed one year due to Covid19 restrictions. With an almost regularly timespan between the conferences of three years, the first NMTC was held in Norway in 1991. The succession of Nordic music therapy conferences thus has been as follows:

- 1991. 1st NMTC, Sandane, Norway
- 1994. 2nd NMTC, Kungälv, Sweden
- 1997. 3rd NMTC, Jyväskylä, Finland
- 2003. 4th NMTC, Bergen, Norway

2006. 5th NMTC, Stockholm, Sweden
2009. 6th NMTC, Aalborg, Denmark
2012. 7th NMTC, Jyväskylä, Finland
2015. 8th NMTC, Oslo, Norway
2018. 9th NMTC, Stockholm, Sweden
2022. 10th NMTC, Helsinki, Finland
2024. 11th NMTC, Aalborg, Denmark

A large group of music therapy colleagues have continuously met for these Nordic conferences and for us as organisers, it was indeed a pleasure to see familiar faces in our house, but also to see new colleagues. Hopefully all will be part of this tradition of meeting, sharing and exchanging knowledge in the years to come.

At our very first meeting with the organising committee, we brainstormed to find a theme for the conference. In this process also Stefan Skov, Julie Ørnholt Bøtker and Sanne Storm helped us, and we quite quickly agreed on the theme: *Let's face the music*. This saying has a double meaning. It is about facing reality, but for us it was also about putting focus on the music we use in our work as music therapist. It was about meeting face to face, certainly affected by a post-covid period with too many online meetings and too little live music shared.

One of the most challenging tasks for us was to reduce the number of presentations. Although we could offer nine concurrent sessions in three full days, there were still too many great and interesting abstracts. With help from the scientific committee (who are all listed at page 149), we used double and sometimes triple blinded assessment scores to cut down the number of presentations. We ended up with 82 paper presentations, 28 poster presentations, 16 roundtables, 5 symposia, and 21 workshops. The duration of the paper presentations were 25 minutes including discussion, one minute pitching in plenum for the posters, and 90 minutes for the rest. Each morning, we started with a keynote presentation who gave insight into research from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and these plenum sessions also included musicing, lyric food for thought, as well as a short storyline about the holy cows of music therapy theories.

We wanted to face the music together and arranged several events where all conference participants were invited to engage in either singing, dancing, playing drums, or playing folk music. Creating music together is an experience that transcends mere sound; it is an act that compels us to adapt, acknowledge, and embrace one another, regardless of our differences. When we make music together, especially when facing each other, we cannot escape the presence of others. This shared act of creation demands something profound from each of us. We are required to listen attentively, to take an active part, and to become integral to the collective rhythm and harmony that we forge together.

The community we build through music is one that necessitates both social and personal skills. It calls on us to be aware of the emotions, perspectives, and contributions of others, fostering a sense of togetherness that transcends individual differences. In this space, we are

not just creating melodies and rhythms; we are weaving a tapestry of human connection that binds us closer together. Music, in this way, becomes more than an art form—it becomes a powerful vehicle for unity, understanding, and the shared human experience.

In this special edition of the Danish Journal of Music Therapy, you will find all the abstracts from the presenters. You will also find that the theme, *Let's face the music*, is clearly reflected in the presentations, for example by facing the music with families, with offender patients, with metaphorical holiday playlists, by facing music in the Nordic countries, and in standards for MT training in Europe. You will also learn about facing (health) music(king), mental health and dementia, facing potentials and pitfalls of interventions (for example singing and songwriting), and, finally, facing money, nature, and music therapists' mistakes,

By diving into these presentations, we as practitioners, researchers and conference participants are urged to ask whether we in fact are facing the music – a question that we also posed at the opening speech. Are we facing reality? We could turn around the question, asking if we are using music as an escape from reality? Which demands us to ask what reality is. One answer to this question is that reality is the prospective of several global crises! According to the United Nations (UN, 2019), we are facing geopolitical tensions and war, climate collapse, deep and growing global mistrust, the dark side of the digital world, and lurking pandemics. And when we consult Our World in Data (2024), we can add extreme poverty, population and demographic change, and many other pressing problems.

We need to ask the question if we, *instead* of facing reality, are using music to escape from and an uncertain future. Is music our escape and are we thus talking about escapism? Escapism is a “pejorative term for behaviour perceived as a retreat from the problems, routines, and tensions of everyday reality - by seeking distraction or relaxation in entertainment or fantasy” (Oxford Reference, 2024, para 1). The German philosopher and musicologist, Theodor Adorno argued that the entertainment function of *mass media* diverted the working class from thinking about their oppression. In his opinion, popular culture, including music, inflicts escapism. Following up on music, the German professor and psychologist, Thomas Schäfer, points at escapism in his investigations of the function of music. He and his team found 129 functions of music in music listening and found that the social importance of music may have been overvalued. They referred to professor of music at the University of Edinburgh, Simon Frith, who saw music as a means of escape in the way that music is a safe form of time-passing, and that music takes us out of ourselves and puts us somewhere else (Frith, 1996). Following this, Schäfer and colleagues concluded that we hardly listen to music for social reasons, but instead use it principally to relieve boredom, maintain a pleasant mood, and create a comfortable private space (Schäfer et al., 2013, p. 7).

We wonder whether Schäfer's understanding of passive music listening is transferred to a general understanding of what music therapy is. Is this how others perceive the function of music in music therapy practice? Then music therapy would be understood as a means to relieve boredom, maintain a pleasant mood, and create a comfortable space. And only this. It would be a way to keep people distracted, passive, non-disturbing, non-complaining. Music

would give our clients a chance to escape – however, might this be because our systems and institutions *need* them to be happily passive?

In a study on music-induced imaginations, Herff and colleagues defined escapism as a cognitive strategy for self-regulation and argued that “... the experience of music-induced imaginations are similar to those observed in other media (e.g., reading), and are characterised as a form of ‘escaping reality’” (Herff et al., 2021, p. 1). To test music-induced imaginations, study participants were asked to perform an imagination task where they were presented with a visual inducer. This directed their imagined journey on a screen. They would see a figure ascending a small hill, and shortly after, the figure reached the top of the hill. Now a large mountain, barely visible, would appear in the far distance, and participants were instructed to close their eyes and imagine a continuation of the journey towards the landmark (Herff et al., 2021). During the imagination task, participants either sat in silence or listened to one of the following musical stimuli, with two different versions of each:

- Bach, Chorale ‘O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden’, from Matthäus Passion BWV244
- Debussy, ‘Tarantelle Styrienne’ L. 69;
- Rodgers, ‘My Favorite Things’

Not surprisingly, the researchers found that musical auditory stimuli (specifically Bach) induce higher vividness of imagined content, leading to the conclusion that their study offers a novel paradigm to investigate directed imagination. The study highlights the recreational benefits of listening to music in terms of escapism.

In a review from German researchers, visual mental images are described as subjective and internally oriented mental states. The imageries are regarded as a modality of mind-wandering, daydreams, and autobiographical memories. Interestingly, the researchers describe how images and emotions evoked by music are closely intertwined, and therefore, that visual mental images have a pivotal role in self-understanding and psychotherapy (Taruffi & Küssner, 2019). With this, they are clearly stating that music listening is not a passive process to be used for passively escaping the outer world. Dr Dave Camlin lectures in music education at the Royal College of Music in London and in his book on music making inspired by holistic philosophy, he focuses on *active* music making. For him music is something that people *do*, and something that *all* humans have always done (Camlin, 2023). He argues that for us, as citizens of the earth, musicing is a practical way of engaging with our responsibilities – and a way of repeatedly materializing the values of love, reciprocity and justice (p.161).

Camlin describes our uncertain future in terms of rising inequality, uneven exploitation of the earth’s resources and much more. He is aware that it sounds naive that musicing could be a solution, nevertheless, he suggests that musicing might be a valuable resource in *how* we address and cope with some of these challenges (Camlin, 2023, p. 6). To address the challenges would require us to perform the best of our ethical human selves, to reveal ourselves to the other and be vulnerable with them—and to find in that exchange a mutual care and compassion which can foster ethical attitudes of kinship and extend beyond the musical encounter.

Camlin leans upon the concept civic imagination. With reference to Jenkin and colleagues' book on *popular culture and the civic imagination* (2020), he argues that ecologic theories view all cultural participation as a form of civic engagement. He suggests a variety of spillover effects generated by the arts, that increase social capital and community capacity. Thus, civic imagination is about how people address the complexities, contradictions, and inconsistencies of living. In this respect, Camlin regards Civic imagination as the capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions. Importantly, the act of imagining is never enough if it does not inspire action.

In conclusion, we emphasise that music induced images have a pivotal role in self-understanding and self-regulation – not only in passive escapism, and according to Camlin, musicing is a potent way in which we can face an uncertain future together, infused with moments of collective joy, and in solidarity with the earth. Finally, being able to imagine pleasure and harmony, may prepare us to cope and act.

With “facing the music” as the underlying theme for the conference, our intention was that participants would share their practice experiences and research studies on musicing and music engagement in the House of Music. We intended participants to be in dialogue, reflect, exchange viewpoints, to lead to change and action, and inspire us all to perform the best of our ethical human selves.

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