



13th European Music Therapy Conference 2025



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

23rd to 27th July, 2025



13th European Music Therapy Conference 2025

A joint conference of German Music Therapy Society, Hamburg
University of Music and Drama and MSH Medical School
Hamburg on behalf of the EMTC

The topic of this year's conference is "Bridges"

With the motto we strive to bring contrasting viewpoints into dialogue, diverse interests into discussion and neighbouring disciplines into interaction. Therefore, we invite students, researchers and practitioners from different music therapy perspectives and from other disciplines to engage with each other in a lively and inspiring exchange.

- **Music itself flows and "bridges"**

Music is a medium that connects, establishes contact, mediates differences, allows encounter, or bonds separate entities. Bridges also play a role in many genres of popular music: As such, the bridge might represent its own aesthetic structure and bring an exciting contrast into the music.

- **In music therapy we use music in many ways**

Music serves as a bridge to the inner world of feelings and memories, as a bridge to non-verbal clients with disorders of consciousness or intellect, or as a bridge to overcome cultural boundaries.

- **The Hamburgers are excellent bridge builders**

With its huge harbour, Hamburg is widely known as the gateway to the world. And with its three rivers Elbe, Bille and Alster and their tributaries and canals, the city has around 2.500 bridges – more than Amsterdam and Venice together!

This abstract volume offers you an insight into the essence of this 13th European Music Therapy Conference.

Your EMTC2025 organising team



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[287] Integrating Research Paradigms: Parent-Infant Synchronization in Music Therapy Among At-Risk Dyads in the first years of life

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Introduction: Synchronization, a key concept in music therapy (MT), involves coordinated actions, movements, and vocalizations between dyads, such as parent-infant or client-therapist. Interpersonal neural synchrony (INS), which reflects this coordination at a neurological level, is increasingly studied in developmental psychology as a biomarker of social bonding and interaction. Often assessed through hyperscanning techniques, INS has been linked to improved infant developmental and parent mental health outcomes. However, at-risk dyads, such as those involving very preterm infants or parents with mental health issues, may experience disruptions in this synchrony. To date, few studies have examined hyperscanning within clinical music therapy settings. This presentation aims to bridge neuroscience and clinical studies in MT, exploring the potential of hyperscanning combined with behavioral synchrony to assess and enhance therapeutic interventions in at-risk parent-infant dyads.

Methods: We will introduce new research projects using cutting-edge methods, such as functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) for hyperscanning and cross-recurrence quantification analysis (CRQA) for behavioral analysis, conducted with clinical populations of infants and parents during MT. These projects combine synchrony measures with other important outcomes such as infant attachment, development and parental mental health.

Results: We will present preliminary findings of a recent feasibility study conducted with very preterm infants, showing high inter-rater reliability outcomes for behaviors such as infant body orientation and state of alert ($\kappa \geq 0.8$).

Discussion: Integrating neuroscience with MT research offers the potential to develop more targeted, effective interventions in infancy, enhancing early life care and supporting both parental mental health and child neurodevelopment.

[313] Bridging conditions, needs, and requirements for music therapy in homeless facilities: Findings from an action research project

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Introduction: Homelessness is a growing social problem and presents people with existential challenges. As a result, there is a need for psychosocial support, which is still rarely provided. Music therapy in this area is also little represented in literature and research.

Methods: In our project [project name blinded for peer review], we connected two approaches: During six months, music therapy was offered to users and staff of a homeless shelter. At the same time, conditions, challenges and requirements for music therapy in the homeless sector were discussed in research workshops with users and staff from various facilities.

Findings: In this way, factors relating to the life situation of homeless persons as well as structural conditions in homeless facilities that are crucial when establishing a music therapy programme were identified. Ways of putting these findings into practice were explored and re-evaluated. Furthermore, insights were gained into how homeless persons can be adequately and actively involved in research.

Discussion/Conclusion: The reality of life for users of homeless facilities is dominated by unpredictability, short-term nature and exceptional emotional situations. In order to adapt music therapy programmes to this, openness, an outreach concept, a strong focus on relationships and maintaining a clear framework are important. In participatory research in this area, the main difficulties encountered and tackled were gaining people's trust and establishing a binding working relationship, as well as finding an adequate form of remuneration.

[604] Co-constructing Care and Musicking Practices: Insights from Nurses and People with Intellectual Disabilities

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Introduction: The study explored the experiences and expressions of care and musicking among nurses and residents (adults with intellectual disabilities) in a residential facility in a psychiatric hospital in South Africa. Informed by care ethics as theoretical framework, it aimed to co-construct meaning around the interplay between care practices and musical engagement in this healthcare setting.

Methods: This participatory action research involved nurses and residents as co-researchers, with their input guiding all aspects of the research process. Data were gathered through weekly focus group discussions over eight months. Arts-based methods facilitated an inclusive research approach, fostering a collaborative space that enabled participation of all.

Discussion: Analysis of the data highlights musicking as an existing practice integrated in nurses' everyday care work, recognising musicking's affordances for both residents and themselves. The performance of care stories and care songs revealed the intricate skills required to attune and respond to care needs in ways that foster meaningful care relationships. Musicking served as a bridge in multiple ways: it elicited and illuminated care stories and connected participants from varied cultural backgrounds and with differing modes of communication. Musicking exemplified care 'in action', performed at both interpersonal and organisational levels, bridging direct care providers/receivers with care-policy developers and implementers.

Conclusion: This research tapped into existing knowledge of everyday care and musicking practices to inform how South African music therapy practice might evolve to consider clinical outcomes for direct service-users alongside musicking's affordances for stakeholders at all levels of this care-ecology.