



Further conferences and information

International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC)

24 Central Park South,
NY 10019

Tel: 212-688-4321

Fax: 212-759-5893

www.international-icc.org

Above (left to right):

Dr. Connie Tamaino, Dr. Yeou-
Cheng Ma, Dr. Richard Kogan,
Professor Edith Boxill,
Dr. Lawrence Ferrara.

Seated: Dr. Mary Adamek
and Dr. Joanne Lowey.

Editorial: Alice Arvan
alicearvan14@aol.com

Design: Reaction Publishing Inc.
reaction@nyc.rr.com

Harnessing Music

New Directions in Global Healthcare Delivery



United Nations
Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations
2001



ICCC



“What a new and vibrant direction... Your body is composed of a box of rhythms: cardiac, sleeping, endocrine....etc. When these rhythms are altered, you have illness or disease.”

Dr. Mathew Lee, speaking about the promise of music therapy at a symposium on Dec 6, 2001 at UN headquarters.



Leading medical, music and therapeutic specialists joined United Nations policymakers and NGOs in a groundbreaking symposium examining the power of musical rhythms to enhance healthcare worldwide.



Carrying the unwieldy title **Music, Technology, Culture and Healthcare**, the event brought together the private and the public sectors and served as a forum for compelling scientific documentation validating rhythm as a healing agent. This growing body of scientific evidence stems from the availability of new and emergent diagnostic technologies. “Research is supporting what we knew all along intuitively about the influence of music on all types of illness,” observed Dr. Mary Adamek, President of the American Music Therapy Association, who spoke at the conference.



From top: Dr. Mathew Lee; left to right, Ms. Aliye Celik and Ms. Thérèse Gastaut; Ambassador André Erdős; Dr. Lawrence Ferrara.

Held on December 6, 2001 at UN headquarters, the symposium was designed to broaden the scope of the **2001 UN Year of Dialogue among**

Civilizations to include the significant issue of how to best harness, apply and distribute this cost-effective and readily plentiful natural resource. According to International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC) Co-founder and President, Professor Dianne Davis, the meeting was also intended to spark similar future policymaker/practitioner global dialogues.

These goals are consistent with those of the Year of Dialogue, she noted, particularly: “transform(ing) theory into practice... (and) actively promote a culture of peace... (by) fostering international cooperation and understanding.”

The proceedings were organized by the ICCC in collaboration with the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, New York University Medical Center, the UN Departments of Public Information and Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the American Music Conference and the National Association of Music.

Speakers stressed the beneficial biological and psychological effects of using music as a complementary healthcare tool, emphasizing its special appeal as an innate and universal language. These characteristics make music therapy cost-effective and universally accessible and make it a pragmatic healthcare solution, given the unequal distribution of wealth and traditional medical services worldwide.

New Frontiers

Dr. Joanne Loewy, Director of the Armstrong Music Therapy Program at Beth Israel Medical Center, reflected the group’s enthusiasm, observing, “We are entering new frontiers in what music therapy can offer in the fields of neonatal intensive care, brain development and pain perception.”

She shared her experience helping a young sickle cell anemia patient discover his inner voice through singing. Because his affliction is not

sufficiently understood, he had become withdrawn and uncommunicative. Singing out his pain and frustration to the organizing beat of the Mississippi blues, his body rhythms revitalized and he began to respond to treatment.

Healing Powers

Others spoke of music’s potential to influence personality and psychology by reducing anxiety, frustration and violent tendencies. Successes with war-traumatized victims and the young, enabling them to attain solace and inner peace, were cited, bringing to mind the often-quoted words of the 17th century English playwright, William Congreve, “Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast...”

The tragic events of September 11 lent the day’s discussion more immediacy and provided a concrete context for these remarks.

Presenters repeatedly referred to music’s longstanding restorative

healing powers. “Music has been used across cultures and centuries to stimulate physical activity and release emotions for sustenance throughout the grieving process,” said Adamek.

“It is critical that we start looking at the evidence and build models for delivery of these services so that all people around the world can benefit from what we have learned,” added Dr. Connie Tamaino, Director, Institute of Neurological Function and Music Therapy, Beth Abraham Family of Health Services. Music’s multifaceted health-giving prowess was given eloquent expression by the luncheon speaker, Ambassador André Erdős from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Hungary, to the UN, who, as a musician himself, confided, “I have always suspected that there was something in music that has the potential of changing the world, improving human ties by touching our souls, and... altering landscapes even in the field of international relations.”

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“Music is a universal, innate language... (with) no national boundaries...Its very accessibility is a vital argument for its widespread usage, particularly, but not only, in developing nations with scarce monetary resources.”

Dr. Mathew Lee, Howard A. Rusk Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine and Adjunct Professor of Music and Music Education at NYU



In their preliminary remarks, Ms. Aliye Celik, Chief, UN Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination and Ms. Thérèse Gastaut, Director, Public Affairs Division, Department of Public Information, spoke of music’s ability to minimize divisiveness and promote mutual understanding. Gastaut read a statement by Giandomenico Picco, Representative of the Secretary-General for the **Year of Dialogue among Civilizations** who described the global dialogue conceived of by the UN as an interchange between “those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who see diversity as a step towards betterment and growth.”



Brave New World

Dr. Mathew Lee, Howard A. Rusk Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine and Adjunct Professor of Music and Music Education at NYU, set the stage with his opening remarks about the expanded use of music to improve rehabilitation in mental functioning,

breathing capacity, pain reduction, and self-expression. Calling music “indispensable for human existence,” he attributed the marked shift in the medical community to embracing music therapy, to the evolving diagnostic technology able to measure neurobiological and chemical changes due to music. Such research has produced a growing body of compelling case histories documenting the efficacy of music in treating illness and in promoting wellness. “Music is a universal, innate language... (with) no national boundaries” said Lee. Its very accessibility, he added, is a vital argument for its widespread usage, particularly, but not only, in developing nations with scarce monetary resources.

Lee urged the audience, many of whom were members of the UN policymaking community, to give time and thought to identifying new and innovative ways to further the utilization of music therapy to reduce the cost of healthcare.

From top: Ms. Kitty Carlisle Hart, Professor Dianne Davis and Dr. Richard Kogan. Opposite: Dr. Yeou-Cheng Ma.

Referring to US Senate testimony he delivered over a decade ago before the Senate Special Committee on Aging, Lee connected the increasing tendency of traditional medicine to embrace such therapies to the swelling ranks of the aging and the simultaneous ever-increasing cost of quality healthcare delivery.

Dr. Barry Bittman, neurologist and Medical Director of the Mind-Body Wellness Center in Pennsylvania, argued for a “pragmatic plan to provide a practical framework for moving ahead.” Such a plan, he explained, should be based on the objective of making music an integral component of the formal study of medicine. It should also advance global awareness and understanding of how musical rhythms can contribute to the wellness of the entire patient, both psychological and biological.

Bittman shared some of his firsthand experiences using drumming

and other rhythmic music tools to improve cancer patient immune systems, to help asthmatics breathe, and to release spasticity in patients with multiple sclerosis—“something drugs have not been able to accomplish,” he said.

Role of Technology

Dr. Joseph Nagler, composer and Co-director of the Rusk Center for Research in Arts and Medicine, focused on the ways technology can be tapped to promote global acceptance of music as therapy and to expand the dialogue across nations. His recommendation—a five-point plan of action for consideration as possible UN policy resolutions.

“We all need to work together. Now is the time to begin this process,” he told the audience. At the heart of his program is his stress on developing “a mechanism to enable scholarly organizations to collaborate on joint research initiatives...

and seeking and discovering new ways to disseminate the latest and best quality information on music therapy and its applications including best practices.”

Nagler urged the audience to think of innovative ways of using existing and emergent technologies to achieve these goals. In particular, he suggested employing streaming videos to facilitate virtual music therapy learning and Web-based databases for communicating quality and timely information on music therapy studies, techniques and applications. He envisions the installation of an energetic, global interactive communications system “that anyone can access from anywhere for information and guidance.”

These proposals, he noted, are consistent with the overall tenets of the **Year of Dialogue**, specifically in emphasizing “international cooperation.”

Part of the allure of music as a therapeutic strategy, is its universality, “culture-specific and environmentally-sensitive.”

Dr. Yeou-Cheng Ma, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Executive Director of the Children’s Orchestra Society.





**“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard,
Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on; Not for the
sensual ear, but more for endeared. Pipe to the spirit...”**

Excerpt from John Keats’ Ode on a Grecian Urn

Dr. Yeou-Cheng Ma, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Executive Director of the Children’s Orchestra Society and an accomplished violinist, spoke of her first-hand experience using music to help children with learning disabilities organize their minds, moods and movements.

Part of the allure of music as a therapeutic strategy, she said, is its universality, “culture-specific and environmentally-sensitive.”

Ma also cited music’s power to engender tolerance and hence, peace and mutual understanding. She then segued into a virtuoso violin performance meant to illustrate how musical language transcends cultures and differences by singing to the humanity in all people. While she didn’t cite the lines from John Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, many in the audience were reminded of those famous words, “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard, Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on; Not for the

sensual ear, but more for endeared. Pipe to the spirit...”

Panel of Music Therapists

This view received further explication from Professor Edith Boxill, founder of Music Therapists for Peace, who noted that her organization has used music as a change agent enabling troubled children to save their own lives. Dr. Richard Kogan, a concert pianist and psychiatrist at the New York Presbyterian Hospital, Cornell Medical Center, spoke about music as a stimulus for self-expression in depressed patients.

The concluding panel discussion on the “impact of musical rhythms in different cultures as a medical tool” was moderated by Dr. Lawrence Ferrara, Chairman of the NYU Music Department. Ferrara observed that so far the day’s presentations affirmed his belief that “the cardinal characteristic of life is rhythm.” He elaborated by adding that the very act of experiencing music is an effective and expedient method for “educating the emotions.”

From top: Percussionist, Glen Velez, Dr. Barry Bittman and Dr. Joseph Nagler

The panel reflected the far-reaching implications and benefits, many as yet untapped or in the pilot stage, of music as therapy. Noted experts Dr. Edith Boxill, Dr. Mary Adamek, Dr. Joanne Loewy and Dr. Connie Tamaino summed up the progress already made in the field, citing specific case histories; and listed organizations and hospitals where such services can be obtained and outlined new directions under study.

Highlights included their success using rhythmic music therapy to—

- **Improve breathing capacity in asthmatics**
- **Help patients suffering from Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia to bond with family they no longer recognize**
- **Improve gait and promote spontaneous vibrations in deep tissues of Parkinson’s patients, releasing spasticity**
- **Increase sucking and oxygen saturation in premature babies**
- **Relax toddlers undergoing medical procedures**
- **Aid in brain development including raising IQs**
- **Help stroke victims regain mobility**

- **Enhance the immune system in cancer patients**
- **Trace the impact of different noise levels through a new field of study called environmental music.**

Treatment Potential of Drumming

Glen Velez, world renowned percussionist, added his “voice,” by mentioning that “drumming that integrates voice is a powerful healing ritual practiced in many cultures for centuries.” In fact, he suggested that music therapists consider interviewing drummers for useful additional information and documentable case histories. He alluded to the earlier remarks made by Dr. Bittman, who reported on his use of group drumming activity to help the cancer patients produce natural cancer-fighting cells.

Velez treated the audience to a rendition of his unique frame drum style that blends techniques from many cultures, relies on the voice to provide cohesiveness and tends to be meditative in tone.

Issues for Future Dialogues

In her concluding remarks, Professor Davis committed ICCC to working with respective UN organizations to

transform the proposals put forth during the day, into formal policy resolutions.

Summing up the proceedings, she outlined an agenda for upcoming discussion and action including fostering research and integrating music into mainstream medicine and establishing what needs to be done to promote the full utilization of the benefits of music.

She defined full benefits as including wellness and rehabilitation and stimulating international dialogues across nations about quality of life issues that impact everyone.

New Healthcare Delivery Directions

In an interview after the symposium, Dr. Lee expanded on the new directions of global healthcare. He sees the road ahead as being marked by the introduction of such entities as Rusk Without Walls, which was recently launched to disseminate Rusk’s medical therapy practices worldwide; and by policy initiatives such as the one announced by the World Health Organization in May of 2002 of formulating regulatory guidelines to ensure the consistency of quality of delivery of alternative medical treatments globally.