

Country Feature:

Music Therapy in China

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Abstract

Music therapy in China has a 30- year history. The pioneers strove to build the training programs and to advocate for the profession. There are music therapy organizations and groups that were established for a variety of different needs and in response to the populations representing the most significant of those needs. The first graduate program of music therapy was started by Prof. Tian Gao at the Central Conservatory of Music in 1997. Currently, 13 music therapy programs in universities have been founded. In recent years, China's public understanding of music therapy has improved as more trained music therapists have starting work here.

Keywords: *Music Therapy, China*

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As music therapy is growing fast in China, there are numerous developments taking place in the profession. The seemingly scattered events are like the puzzle pieces, when you carefully put them together, a clear and beautiful picture is most certainly evolving. The author's wish is that the presented information herein will give the reader a sense of the progress of music therapy's developing quest in this, the largest country in East Asia.

Music therapy Organizations/Groups

China is a vast country that has a large population. The field of music therapy in this big country becomes diverse with variety. There are two music therapy organizations and an unofficial group of music therapists. Each of them was founded to address a critical need in a particular stage of music therapy's development.

The Chinese Society of Music Therapy (CSMT) was

founded in 1989. The mission of music therapy was: "Discussing, studying and advocating music therapy, as well as creating and developing the music therapy with Chinese characteristics by cooperating closely with professionals from the disciplines of music, medicine, psychology, science and medical equipment making." As the CSMT's website states, there are more than 600 members who are professionals in the fields of medicine, music, education, psychology and medical equipment making. It also says that music therapy in China before 1990 were experiments by using music in health care devices, for example, Music-Electro-Acupuncture apparatus. The effects of the music-health care equipments were reported as a method of music therapy on Chinese academic journals and newspapers. It brought music's importance in health to public's awareness, but it increased misunderstanding of music therapy which was probably unavoidable in the infant stage of development.

A national CSMT conference was hosted every 2-3 years. The recent two conferences' quality was significantly enhanced. The international keynotes and speakers were Dr. Barbara Wheeler, Dr. Märith Bergström-Isacsson (Sweden), Xinyi Lai (Taiwan), Dr. Michael Thaut (U.S.), Dr. Patsy Tan (Singapore), and Dr. Myoung-Hun Song (Korea) [1].

Because most members in CSMT are not music therapists, Prof. Tian Gao as the first Western trained music therapist found the importance of establishing an organization for qualified music therapists rather than having any related professional practice who were simply interested in music therapy. The Chinese Professional Music Therapist

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Association (CPMTA) was founded in August 2007. The CPMTA states in their website, “CPMTA is an association for Chinese music therapists. The mission of the committee is promoting the education and training of music therapists in China, establishing a team of Chinese music therapists that meets the international professional standard, driving the profession to develop in a fast and healthy way.” CPMTA’s works include creating the standard for music therapists’ education and training, making the standard of practice for Chinese music therapists, formulating the code of ethics, giving exams for music therapists’ certification, and providing continuing education for certified music therapists.

The CPMTA provides the exam of certification and training for becoming a Registered Music Therapist (RMT). In 2014, CPMTA approved an internship site for the candidate of music therapy to receive onsite training [2]. Candidates need to either have certain amount of off-site supervision, or finish the appointed internship before applying the RMT. According to the CPMTA’s website, there are currently 65 RMTs as of Oct. 2015 [3]. The CPMTA is an association for professional music therapists. It sets the standard of music therapy in the United States as a model, and it furthermore aims to promote the healthy development of the profession in China.

In 2014, a group of young music therapists found the China Music therapy Alliance (CMTA) for creating a supporting network for music therapy clinicians who are actively working in the clinical settings. The mission of CMTA is, “to unite and to integrate the strengths in the music therapy’s field, to promote the healthy development of the profession, and to advocate music therapy”. All members have a degree in music therapy and a full-time/part-time job as a music therapist in a clinical institution. The board members of CMTA meet every month and make effort to move the alliance forward. In the past two years, CMTA have been translated important English literature to provide resource for Chinese music therapists’ reference. The Alliance has not been registered on the government’s list, but it is actively going forward and striving to support music therapy clinicians.

Academic Programs

A training program of music therapy was started by Hongyi Zhang in the China Conservatory of Music in 1989 (CCM). The program was a two-year curriculum for nurses and psychotherapists from the Beijing Huilong’guan Hospital (BHH), who sought to use music in their clinical practice. This program paused after the first group of students graduated. Since there were no trained music therapists and no referable music therapy training programs at that time, the courses merely consisted of several psychology courses, related medical courses and music courses, and two music therapy courses. The course Music Therapy was taught by Hongyi Zhang. Another course Clinical Application of Music therapy was taught by Zuoshu Fan who was a psychiatrist at the BHH.

In 2007, Hongyi Zhang restarted the music therapy program at the CCM as she returned to the college. There were 11 graduates who received master degrees of music therapy from the CCM [4].

As the first Western trained music therapist, Prof. Tian Gao returned China in 1997 and started the first graduate program of music therapy in the CCOM [5]. The establishing of the program started a new chapter of music therapy in China. In 2002, CCOM started the undergraduate program of music therapy. The program set the curriculum according to the standard of American Music Therapy Association (AMTA). The major courses include Introduction to Music therapy, Foundation of Music therapy, Receptive Methods of Music therapy, Improvisational Methods of Music therapy, Assessments of Music therapy, English Literature and Articles of Music therapy, Developmental Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, The Skills and Methods in Psycho-Counseling. Students also need to finish six months’ internship in an assigned clinical site in order to graduate. The courses of music therapy had been taught by Prof. Tian Gao, Ming-Ming Liu, Loting Chen and Sisi Lin. The internship ship sites: Xuanwu Hospital Capital Medical University, Beijing Children’s Hospital, Chinese PLA General Hospital, Beijing Xicheng Pingan Hospital (Psychiatric Hospital), and China Rehabilitation Research Center. The Music therapy Program at CCOM provides students opportunity to study abroad. Prof. Gao and Dr. Mary Boyle facilitated the first exchange-student-program of music therapy between China and U.S. Senior students can choose to study in the Music therapy Program at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. 12 students have finished this program. The graduates of CCOM are the first generation of trained music therapists in China. There are also a few alumnus who became teachers of music therapy in universities.

As the first complete music therapy academic program successfully established in the best conservatory in China, many conservatories, music departments in universities, and medical schools follow CCOM’s model to start building music therapy programs. To the date, there are 13 academic programs in the universities.

International Conferences, Academic Visiting, and Training Institutes

The field of music therapy in China has been connecting closely with the world. The professionals want to learn advanced knowledge and skills of music therapy from the western countries. Since 1995, many internationally renowned experts of music therapy have visited China and supported the early development of music therapy in this special country. In 1995, Dr. Cheryl Dileo as the President of the World Congress of Music therapy visited Hongyi Zhang’s work at the COM in Beijing. Dr. Clive Robbins with his teaching assistant Jenny Hoi Yan Fu gave 4-day workshops at the Beijing Union

University in 2005 and the Guangdong Nanhai Women & Children's Hospital in 2007. From 2004 to 2014, Dr. Suzanne Hanser, Dr. ChihChen Sophia Lee, Dr. Clive Robbins, Dr. Barbara Wheeler, Dr. Rob Amchin, Dr. Maria Montserrat Gimeno, Dr. Blythe Lagasse, Dr. Annie Heiderscheid, and Kalani Das visited CCOM and gave workshops to the students.

The international conferences have promoted the international exchange and sharing of knowledge in China and provided opportunities for Chinese professionals to learn and to grow. In 2009, Professor Tian Gao became a Founding Member (iammonline.com) of the International Association for Music and Medicine (IAMM) [6]. He has played a critical role in the international efforts in growing and integrating music and medicine across the globe. The 2009 International Convention of Music Therapy and Crisis Intervention was organized by the CPMTA. Clare O'Callaghan, Barbara Else, Petra Kern, Joanne Loewy, Lucanne Magill and Barbara Wheeler were the invited international experts who gave presentation and workshops at the convention [7]. The experts also shared experience of crisis intervention with Prof. Gao and a group of music therapy students who provided music therapy for earthquake survivors after the Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008. A qualitative study about Prof. Gao's group's perception on their music project for the survivors was initiated during the convention and published on the Nordic Journal of Music Therapy [8].



Prof. Tian Gao was working with an earthquake survivor in 2008

In May 2012, CCOM hosted the 3rd Music Therapy International Forum. Dr. Diane Austin, Dr. Friederike Haslbeck, Dr. Suzanne Hanser, Dr. James Hiller, Dr. Brian Abrams, Dr. Peggy Coddling, Dr. Beth Bolton, Angela Ferraiuolo, Aimee Telsey, M.D. and Ann Dassler R.N. visited CCOM and gave lectures and workshops to the conference participants. The contents covered music therapy for maternity, new born, and NICU; infant's musical development; vocal music psychotherapy; and humanistic music therapy [9].



A group of children were dancing during music therapy student's performance after the earthquake in 2008

In addition to the international conferences, there are international trainings on specific music therapy approach in China. Since 2009, Dr. Lisa Summer started a GIM training institute in Beijing. 40 professionals that include music therapists and psychologists had received the training. In June 2016, the first International Neurological Music Therapy Training institute will be hosted in the Wuxi Mental Health Center in Jiangsu Province.

New Development

In China, Music therapists work with various populations in psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation centers, general hospitals, maternity hospitals, communities, rehabilitation center for substance abuse, private music therapy centers, and NGOs. As music therapy develops and the needs in the society increase, many mental hospitals and rehabilitation hospitals in big cities established music therapy center. As a result, the number of music therapist's positions has increased fast in recent years. The professional team of music therapists is getting stronger as more trained graduates from the universities in China and western countries join the field.

Music therapy in communities developed fast in the last two years. The Chinese government became aware of the importance of citizens' mental health, especially for those vulnerable populations such as adults with intellectual disability, children with special needs and homeless children. The local government's agencies have integrated music therapy service in many communities for the populations in needs. In last year, Gao's Music Therapy Center had provided 620 group sessions for adults with intellectual disability or mental disease at 15 communities in Beijing. The total numbers of people who received the service was above 11'000. In another city, Chengdu, the Yueling Center for the Development of Philanthropy had provided individual or

group music therapy for more than 3000 homeless children by the support from the government's funding.

Conclusion

Music therapy is developing rapidly in China. There are developmental issues that the professionals have to face. Music therapists in China seek to unite and to make joint efforts for assuring the profession's healthy development. We believe that public's understands of music therapy will be promoted as more music therapists providing qualified and professional service to clients. We hope the development of music therapy will allow more and more people benefit from our work in the future.

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