

# Book of abstracts and one-page summaries

PHD COURSE IN MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH

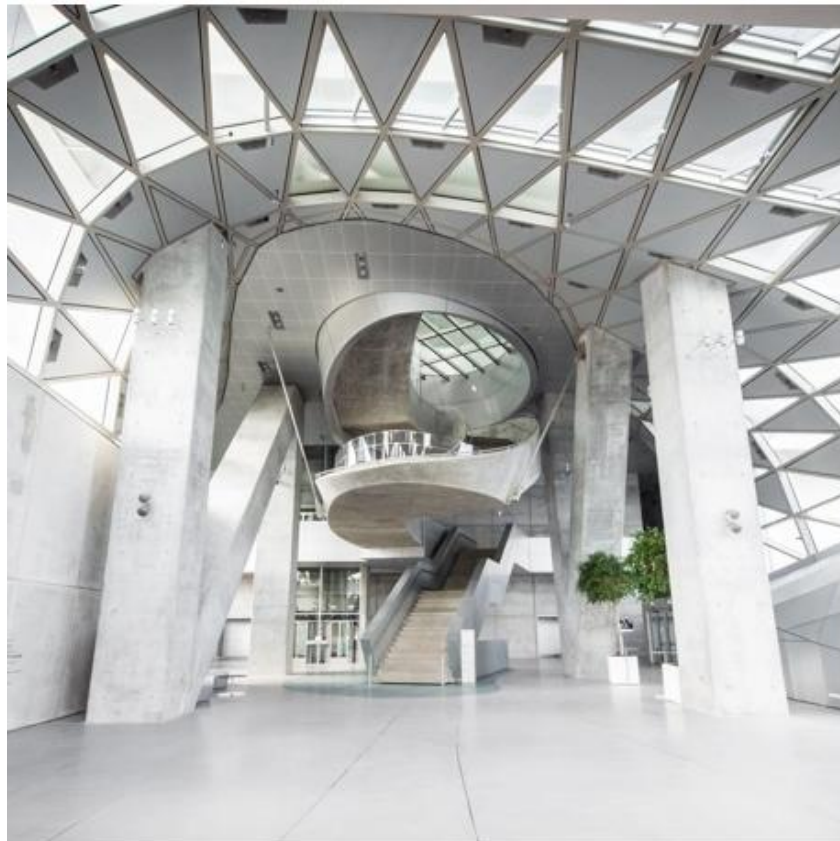
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PhD Specialisation in Music Therapy Research

Department of Communication and Psychology

Aalborg University, Denmark

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## Lectures and workshops at the course

### **Annie Heiderscheit: Integrating emotional and physical health: Cross-case analysis of the Hero's Journey in GIM**

The hero's journey is prevalent in literature and the cinema. It is also often utilized as a framework within which to explore and understand the circuitous nature of a client's therapeutic process. The hero's journey is often thought of and discussed predominantly as a psychological and emotional process occurring within the mythological and imagery world of the client, typically accompanied and facilitated by the GIM therapist. However, qualitative research/case studies conducted by researchers/clinicians from four different countries have unearthed unexpected affordances of the hero's journey via narrative and thematic analyses of clients' GIM experiences. This presentation examines relevant research and writings in this area, challenges predominant assumptions, and expands the concept of the hero's journey in relation to physical and mental health. Heiderscheit explores and reviews four applied clinical research/case studies using GIM, where clients have undergone literal physical transformation and/or engaged with both physical and psychological aspects of their health conditions within their therapeutic and recovery processes. She adopts a cross-case analysis approach to compare four GIM clients' experiences within four different contexts: cardiac rehabilitation, addictions treatment, cancer care, and a single musician. Client history and case material from each research/case study is clearly presented in terms of methodology and the emergence of the hero's journey. Clinical illustrations, imagery, and music excerpts are also included. The cross-case analyses elucidate processes and outcomes, and a new integrative model is proposed which links manifestations of mental and physical health with the hero's journey.

**Annie Heiderscheit**, MT-BC, Professor of Music Therapy & Director Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research, Anglia Ruskin University, has authored +30 book chapters, + 40 peer reviewed articles, and four books related to music therapy research and practice. She is a marriage and family therapist, trainer of HealthRhythms® through Remo, Inc., and trained GIM-therapist. Prior to joining the faculty at ARU, Annie served as the Director of Music Therapy at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota for 10 years. At Augsburg she developed the Master of Music Therapy program and redesigned the curriculum in the undergraduate music therapy program. Annie has been collaborating with interdisciplinary research teams for nearly 20 years. These collaborations have focused on using patient-directed music listening to address complex symptoms of mechanically ventilated, critically ill, and hospitalised patients and their families.

### **Readings for the lecture**

Heiderscheit, A., Short, A., Trondalen, G., & Young, L. (2025). An integration of physical and psychological health through The Hero's Journey in Guided Imagery & Music: A cross-case analysis. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2025.102348>

## **Bolette Daniels Beck: Journal club. Pain-reducing effects of music interventions**

**Bolette Daniels Beck**, PhD, associate professor, Department of Culture and Communication, AAU.  
<https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/bolette/>

### **Readings for the journal club**

Koelsch, S., & Bradt, J. (2025). A neuroscientific perspective on pain-reducing effects of music: Implications for music therapy and mental well-being. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1550(1), 71-76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.70015>

Parr, H., & Hu, J. (2025). Music interventions to reduce anxiety and pain in surgical patients: an umbrella review. *Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing*. 40(5), 1316-1324.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jopan.2024.11.009>

## **Christine Dysers: Field Notes from Music Academia**

This presentation explores how a mix of questions, people, places, and crises have shaped my academic identity. I present my academic journey in the form of a guided tour, complete with detours, dead ends, and scenic highlights. Along the way, we stop in Leuven, London, New York City, Stockholm and Aalborg, highlighting the key research questions and methods that have guided my trajectory thus far, as well as reflecting on the many quiet forces —the people, experiences, and roadblocks— that have invited me to shift gears along route.

**Dr Christine Dysers** is an Assistant Professor in Music at Aalborg University. Her work focuses on music since 1989, with a particular emphasis on contemporary music philosophy. Her research interests include the aesthetics of repetition, the politicality of music, and the notions of the weird and the eerie. <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/christined/>

## **Gustavo Gattino: Neuroscience Frontiers in Music Therapy Research: From Brain Networks to Organoids**

Recent advances in neuroscience are reshaping the landscape of music therapy research across all populations. This lecture examines four key developments with direct implications for clinical and empirical practice. First, findings on the Default Mode Network (DMN) in the context of music are explored, addressing how this brain system — active during rest, self-referential thought, and emotional processing — interacts with musical experience and what that means for therapeutic applications. Second, interbrain synchronization studies are discussed, revealing how musical engagement creates measurable neural coupling between individuals and offering new frameworks for understanding the relational and group dimensions of music therapy. Third, the growing landscape of portable neuroimaging and biosensing technologies — such as mobile EEG, fNIRS, and wearable devices — is surveyed, highlighting how these tools are enabling the assessment of the nervous system's response to music in real-world, ecologically valid settings. Finally, the emerging science of cerebral organoids ("mini brains") is introduced, with a discussion of how these laboratory models may deepen understanding of the fundamental mechanisms underlying human music

processing. Together, these advances call for an updated, neuroscience-informed approach to music therapy research methodology.

**Gustavo Gattino**, PhD, associate professor, Department of Culture and Communication, AAU. <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/gattino/>

### **Hanne Mette Ridder: Perspectives on graphical abstracts for presenting research**

**Hanne Mette Ridder**, PhD, professor, director of the PhD specialisation in music therapy research, Department of Culture and Communication, AAU. <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/hmr>

### **Readings**

Oliverio, M., & Wright, D. E. (2025). The art of the graphical abstract—a visual approach to scientific storytelling. *FEBS letters*, 599(24), 3549-3552 (first four pages). <https://doi.org/10.1002/1873-3468.70163>

Supplementary reading

Khan, M. M., & Link, S. (2025). Unpacking the metagenre of graphical abstracts for scientific communication. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 77, 101567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2025.101567>

### **Jose Laporte: Health Data Visualization: Seeing to Understand, Communicate, and Decide**

Health data analytics and visualization enable clinical management, research, and informed decision-making by improving understanding and communication of information through analytics and data storytelling. In this presentation, we will look at real examples of health dashboards and learn some simple storytelling techniques to help data communicate more clearly and make an impact.

**Jose Laporte** is a specialist in Internal Medicine and Intensive Care Medicine and after working for several years in France, he completed his training at the Institute of Public Health of Bordeaux (ISPED) and at the National School of Health of the Carlos III Institute and Hospital. Subsequently, he moved to the University Hospital of Araba, where he began collaborating with Bioaraba researchers and teaching Medical Pathophysiology at UPV/EHU. He has also worked in the Osakidetza services of Emergency, ICU, Home Hospitalization, and Medical Subdirection. He currently works in the Health Management Unit to transform data into information that facilitates decision-making in the organization.

### **Niels Christian Hansen: Socioemotional experiences of classical concert audiences**

Applause gestures – such as clapping, standing ovations, and loud vocalizations – express concertgoers' in-the-moment enjoyment of concert performances. Such strange, ritualistic displays of enthusiasm occurring in response to demonstrations of impressive skills during

large social gatherings are perhaps so ubiquitous that we altogether forget to question their ontology. Indeed, not every applause is the same. Rich anecdotes describe how different folks have expressed their excitement in multifaceted ways during different historical times and different cultural contexts. So why do people clap in the first place? And which cultural beliefs and socioemotional dynamics underlie the vast diversity of human applause behaviours during concert experiences? In this talk, I will present preliminary data and plans for a large-scale research project funded to tackle these questions in collaboration with Aarhus Symphony Orchestra during 2025–29. I will also share some new insights from a cross-cultural survey study showing intriguing contrasts in the applause habits of symphonic concert audiences in Northern and Southern Europe and some fresh findings relating to the effects of introducing the performed repertoire via oral concert introductions or written program notes.

**Niels Chr. Hansen** is an Associate Professor of Music at Aalborg University where he directs the Cognitive Musicology and Performance Science Lab (CoMPaS). He currently serves as Vice-President of European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (ESCOM), Editor-in-Chief of Empirical Musicology Review, and co-founder of the global MUSICOVID research network. His team’s ongoing research projects include “PLAY: Timbral Diversification for Personalised Learning in Aural Skills Pedagogy” and “CLAPS: Collective Applause in the Symphonic Concert Hall.” He also teaches music theory, history, and analysis as an Associate Professor at Royal Academy of Music Aarhus/Aalborg.

<https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/nielsch/>

## Presentations of research in progress

### Alberto Balducci: Enactive musicking. Musical interaction as embodied social cognition

**Supervisor:** Barbara Zanchi

**Title of the study:** Steps towards an enactivist music therapy

**Background/Context:** Within music therapy there always existed a “quest for meaning”: where does the core of our practice reside? How to make sense of the music that is enacted in every therapeutic encounter? The classic cognitivist view advocated a “third person approach” that downplayed the role of situated, first person experience. While we as relational music therapists always felt that the lived stories and the “here and now” encounter were the real containers of the therapeutic process, where its real significance was being held. With the “embodied revolution” in cognitive science (4E cognition, enactivism: Varela, Thompson, Di Paolo, De Jaegher, etc.) we might have a chance to ground these intuitions into the current scientific discourse and investigate them in a deeper way. This holds the premises to build a comprehensive theory of music therapy that is at once multidisciplinary and explanatory of the dynamic processes at play in therapeutic sessions. This research hopes to develop the preliminary reflections of Høffding, Snekkestad and Stige (2024) who suggest that enactivism holds a promise for music therapy “to see how “higher order cognitive functions” are integrated with “situated and embodied actions”, a crucial connection for musicking”.

**Research questions:** Is an enactivist view of music therapy able to ground the theory and practice of music therapy into the contemporary cognitive science discourse? Is an enactivist lens capable of accounting for the dynamic processes at play in a music therapy session?

**Research design:** Theory development; qualitative data analysis.

**Method:**

**Phase one:** Literature review and critical analysis to outline the core theory of an enactivist perspective for music therapy.

**Phase two:** Qualitative study: video micro-analysis of music therapy sessions and semi structured interviews with professional music therapists and other relevant informants (to be defined).

**Phase three:** final integration and dissemination of the resulting enactivist music therapy perspective.

**Current state of the study:** Phase one.

**Topic for the presentation:** Enactivism holds that “meaning” is a dynamic co-construction of all the individuals involved in the interaction, within a loop between brain, body and environment. Social interaction constitutes social cognition. Cognition is embodied, embedded and extended. As a first step towards an enactivist declination of music therapy theory and practice, and to bridge the enactive thinking with the music therapy tradition, I propose an enactive reading of Christopher Small’s concept of “musicking”. The reason for this choice is to be found in the need for a musicology focused on “dynamic interactions” rather than “static musical objects”. This is important to achieve a coherent musical discourse able to ground both social, aesthetic and therapeutic discourses within the practice of music therapy. I argue that the enactivist approach, which merges phenomenology, neurology, biology and dynamic systems theory, can provide such grounds.

## Diandra Russo: “Turning the Phenomenological Kaleidoscope” - Preliminary Data Sketches from the Monochord Study

**Supervisors:** Dr. Hanne Mette Ochsner Ridder and Dr. rer. medic. Friederike Haslbeck

**Working Title of the Study:** “Moment’s Notice” - A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Intersubjective Experiences Using Monochord Sounds

**Context:** The purpose of this article-based PhD is to study, explore, and explicate the intersubjective phenomena of a (live) receptive music therapy intervention using monochord sounds. The study is embedded within an interdisciplinary research project at Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland.

**Design:** The main study is designed as a two-armed randomized controlled crossover trial. A mixed-methods design is employed, with pre-, peri-, and post-intervention measurements. The effects of monochord sounds on healthy adults aged 20–29 years are investigated. All participants receive one session in each of the two conditions (live vs. prerecorded monochord sounds) in a randomized order.

### **Method and Research Questions:**

**Article 1** is a study protocol following SPIRIT guidelines, titled: “The Effects of Live vs. Pre-recorded Monochord Sounds on Healthy Adults: Study Protocol for a Crossover Randomized Controlled Trial.” The goal of this protocol is to foster discussion and collaboration within this theoretical framework.

**Article 2** is an autoethnographic portrait of my perspective, pre-understanding, and personal experience using monochord sounds in clinical practice.

**Current State of the Study:** Article 1 was published in the Nordic Journal of Music Therapy in July 2025. Data collection is complete (n = 66), and both quantitative and qualitative analyses are in progress. Article 2 was submitted to the journal Arts in Psychotherapy in November 2025 and, after major revisions, is currently in its first round of revisions.

**Topics of the Presentation:** In this presentation, I will provide an update on my PhD progress through preliminary sketches from the monochord study. Viewing the data through the metaphor of a kaleidoscope it has revealed many possible colors and perspectives. As the focus for the third article is still taking shape, I invite the group into this exploratory process and welcome discussion on how the focus might be refined and aligned with the broader aims of my PhD, particularly in reassessing the relevance and role of intersubjectivity considering the emerging preliminary data.

## Eva Phan Quoc: Conceptualising a Music Therapy Approach: The Privilege of Diving Deep

**Supervisors:** Thomas Stegemann (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna) and Stine Lindahl Jacobsen

**Working title of the study:** Attachment-based MusikSpielTherapie (MST) [MusicPlayTherapy]: Further Development and Conceptualisation of an Attachment-based Music Therapy Approach for Infants and their Caregivers

**Research design:** Qualitative study in an explorative design

**Overarching research question:** What perspectives and understandings emerge from the process of further developing and conceptualizing an "Attachment-based MusicPlayTherapy (AB-MST)" for music therapy with infants and their caregivers?

### **PART I: Mapping and contextualising the original MST approach**

Method: Expert interviews with the founders; qualitative content analysis

MST is a music therapy approach developed by K. Stumptner and C. Thomsen in Berlin (DE) that works in a triadic setting with the child (aged 0–4 years) and the caregiver. The initial phase of this research project entailed a critical examination of the MST concept. The objective was to present a comprehensive and detailed description of this music therapy approach.

1) *What is the history, conceptual basis and practical application of MST from the perspective of the founders and on the basis of existing literature?*

### **PART II: Development of an expanded concept of Attachment-based MST (AB-MST)**

Method: Literature work In the second part of the study, the AB-MST concept is developed based on the results of Part A and current relevant literature. The MST approach is discussed from an attachment theory perspective and new elements are added. The objective is to provide more detailed and practical knowledge about attachment-based music therapy techniques, interventions and methods.

2) *How can this extended concept of attachment-based MST be described?*

Goal: Conceptualisation of attachment-based MST

- *Which role do attachment-based elements, offers or interventions play in the original approach of MST? (Goal: Analysis of MST from an attachment theory perspective)*
- *How can an emphasis on an additional attachment-based perspective and concrete attachment-based elements enrich the content of the MST concept? (Goal: Expansion and enrichment of the method with elements of other (MT) attachment-based approaches)*
- *What are key characteristics that define MST in the context of other approaches to music therapy work with infants and their families? (Goal: Positioning of MST in the field of MT work with families with infants)*

**Topic of the presentation:** Addressing the challenges of conceptualisation & current status

## Jenny Burnazzi: The Lived Experience of Music Therapy (MT) in Adolescents with Eating Disorders (EDs) in an Inpatient Setting: A Work in Progress – Current Project Status and Future Research Directions

**Supervisor:** Barbara Zanchi, Conservatorio Maderna-Lettimi di Cesena-Rimini, Italy

**Title of study:** The Lived Experience of Music Therapy for Adolescents with Eating Disorders in an Inpatient Setting

**Primary research question:** this study explores the lived meaning of music therapy for adolescents with eating disorders during hospitalization, focusing in particular on how this experience may shape their perception of time, the hospital environment, and their sense of self.

- 1) How is music therapy experienced by adolescents with eating disorders during hospitalization?
- 2) How does music therapy during hospitalization influence their perception of time and context?
- 3) How does music therapy during hospitalization influence adolescents' experience of self?

**Research design:** This study adopts a qualitative, phenomenological, and interpretivist approach. It is designed as a qualitative study, where multiple forms of data are collected to support an exploratory inquiry grounded in phenomenological and interpretative frameworks. Quantitative measures are used in a supportive and orienting role to contextualize the qualitative investigation.

### **Method:**

*Phase one* is based on a retrospective, descriptive-reflective analysis of clinical journals and materials collected during a pilot phase conducted in an inpatient setting for adolescents with eating disorders (2022–2025). In addition, a preliminary semi-structured pilot interview with one patient was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith) to explore the lived experience of music therapy and identify emerging experiential themes. This exploratory phase serves both as a contextual familiarisation process and to inform the subsequent development of the intervention and the research design.

*Phase two* focuses on the development of a music therapy intervention informed by the findings from part one, as well as ongoing observations of a new clinical context and collaboration with clinical staff. Music therapy sessions will be conducted in an individual setting and will incorporate both active and receptive methods.

*Phase three* involves the implementation of the music therapy intervention and the collection of data. Data will be collected through session feedback questionnaires administered at the end of each session, semi-structured interviews conducted at the end of the intervention and clinical journals. Quantitative data (MASK-2, PWB) will be collected independently by ward clinical staff during routine clinical practice, and will be used descriptively to inform the qualitative analysis.

*Phase four* includes the analysis and integration of the collected data. Data analysis will involve Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

**Current state of the study:** The study has now moved on to the third phase, which involves implementing the music therapy intervention and collecting data at the Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry Unit, IRCCS Institute of Neurological Sciences of Bologna (ISNB), Bellaria Hospital (Bologna).

**Topic for the presentation:** An overview of the current stage of the research process, with a focus on the IPA approach to data analysis and on key challenges encountered to date, such as how best to integrate multiple data sources into the analysis.

## **Lorenzo Bernini: Towards an Integrated Methodological Model for the Study of a Music Therapy Intervention in Preterm Toddlers During their Second Year of Life**

**Supervisors:** Barbara Zanchi, Luca Bergonzini

**Title of the study:** Study on the Impact of a Music Therapy Intervention on the Development of Preterm Toddlers During their Second Year of Life

**Background/Context:** preterm birth is associated with an increased risk of neuropsychological and relational difficulties. Research on music therapy mainly focuses on interventions in the early stages of life of preterm babies. Instead, the present study aims to evaluate the impact of a music therapy intervention during the second year of life.

**Research questions:**

- What changes in the development of preterm toddlers can be observed following a music therapy intervention carried out during their second year of life?
- How do music therapy interactions contribute to relational processes between preterm toddlers and their parents during this developmental phase?

**Research design:** the study adopts a constructivist-contextualist approach and a mixed methods design aimed at a structured integration of data. This approach brings into relation the qualitative analysis of music therapy, the relational processes and the quantitative analysis of developmental outcomes.

**Method:**

*Qualitative data:* semi-structured interviews with parents (pre- and post-intervention) and audio-video excerpts from music therapy sessions, with particular attention to sound-based musical interactions.

*Quantitative data:* longitudinal data collection at 12 and 24 months across several developmental domains (Bayley Scale III; Griffith Scale III). Comparison between the intervention group and a historical control group.

*Quantitative analysis:* statistical analysis of temporal variations and between-group differences.

*Qualitative analysis:* conducted through Reflective Thematic Analysis as an interpretative and iterative process of theme construction, articulated across multiple levels of analysis that integrate qualitative and quantitative data (interviews, sound-based musical interactions, analysed quantitative data, and engagement with the socio-healthcare team).

**Current state of the study:** the study is currently in an advanced stage of preparation, with the protocol in the finalisation phase and data collection expected to begin shortly.

Topic for the presentation: I will focus on the discussion of the research design, in particular the iterative approach articulated across multiple levels of analysis. Here, interpretations are constructed and reworked through engagement with the clinical context. I will then explore with the audience the possibilities and challenges of a non-hierarchical integration of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as its relevance for understanding and informing clinical practice

## **Maria Gabriela Nicolau: A practice-based reflection on a long-term music therapy group with older adults**

**Topic of presentation:** Not enrolled as a doctoral student, but interested in clinical research and publishing my work, I will present clinical reflection on a long-term music therapy group in a residential care setting. In addition I will include some clinical moments from my two books, while also sharing my current struggle to find the right language for this work. I haven't yet found the terms or constructs that truly capture the 'essence' of the music therapy experience as I feel it, and I am hoping that, by reflecting on this together, some new ideas might emerge.

### **References:**

1 - Reflexões sobre o envelhecimento e a demência através da musicoterapia [Reflections on ageing and dementia through music therapy] (2024). Lisbon International Press.

2 - Nicolau, M. G. (2024). When (if) to stop?: Music therapy with persons living with severe dementia – Reflections on years of care and connection. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 33(5), 442–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2024.2369053>

3 - Através da música: uma perspectiva terapêutica [Through music: a therapeutic perspective] (2017). Chiado editora.

## **Maria Gjerulf Schmidt: From learning space to care space: An autoethnographical exploration of PAMI-based musical care practices in dementia care**

**Supervisors:** Hanne Mette Ridder and Ulla Holck, AAU

**Working titel of the study:** Quality improvement in the culture of residential care for persons with dementia through the implementation of person-attuned musical interactions (PAMI)

**The primary purpose** of this PhD study study is to explore how the integration of person-attuned musical interactions (PAMI) into dementia care affects the culture of care in residential care settings. Specifically, I explore caregivers' learning processes during PAMI training and the ways PAMI shapes everyday care interactions. Through an autoethnographic lens and a Freirean perspective in article 1, a phenomenological focus on lived experience descriptions (LEDs) in article 2, and an emphasis on the relational space in article 3, I seek to understand how spaces of trust, empowerment and attuned care can be fostered and enhance the perceived professional and societal worth of care.

### **Research questions:**

- 1) What happens in the learning space during the process where PAMI is implemented? (article 1)
- 2) How does the implementation of PAMI affect the caregiver's experience of having professional value, and how is the value of care experienced in concrete PAMI care situations?? (article 2)
- 3) What changes are seen in the relationship between the caregiver and the person with dementia? (article 3)

**Research design:** The study will be based on an explorative research design.

**Method:** Interpretivist methods including ethnographic and autoethnographic methods will be applied to answer the research question.

**Current state of the study:** Reading Freire, getting to know his thoughts and theory about the pedagogy of the oppressed and analysing autoethnographic personal essays (APE) through the lens of Freire

**Topic for the presentation:** I will briefly present key insights from article 1 (autoethnography, Freire and the learning space as frame) and then invite you to help me think through one of its central findings: structural work peace. More specifically, I want to test and refine this concept by asking you to reflect on your own learning experiences: what has to be in place before reflection is even possible, and do these conditions appear universal or are they shaped by institutional context, by the norms of particular academic and professional fields – or by social background?

## Selina Kehl: Exploring Interpersonal Synchrony within a Triadic Creative Music Therapy Setting: A Focus on the Study Design

**Supervisors:** Stine Lindahl Jacobsen, AAU & Friederike Haslbeck, Department of Neonatology, University Hospital Zurich, Switzerland

**Title of the study:** *When Hearts, Brains, and Ears Align: Interpersonal Synchrony in Creative Music Therapy Triads of Infants With Congenital Heart Disease, Their Mothers, and the Music Therapist.*

**Background/Context:** Synchrony is a key feature of early mother-infant interactions and plays a central role in regulating infants' physiological states, stress responses, and social orientation (Leclère et al., 2014; Scatliffe et al., 2019).

This is particularly relevant in infants with congenital heart disease (CHD), as their early attachment processes may be challenged by medical interventions and prolonged hospitalisation (Biber et al., 2019; Kasparian et al., 2019).

Physiological synchrony, often assessed via heart rate variability (HRV), provides a window into underlying autonomic co-regulatory processes (Flater et al., 2025).

Creative music therapy (CMT) supports and strengthens the parent-infant relationship (Haslbeck, 2014) and may facilitate synchronised interactions through its individualized, resource-oriented, and family-centred approach. To date, no study has examined behavioural and physiological synchrony within CMT in infants with CHD, their mothers, and the music therapist.

**Research questions:** The main research objective is to explore how behavioural and physiological interpersonal synchrony unfolds within predefined moments of interest during CMT sessions, and how these patterns differ from pre- and post-session measures within the defined triad.

**Research design:** The study is a sub-study of an RCT ("BOND-study") at the University Children's Hospital Zurich, Switzerland, using a convergent mixed-methods design.

**Method:** To investigate interpersonal synchrony, a multi-method approach is used:

- Physiological data (heart rate, heart rate variability) from 30 mother-infant-therapist triads are collected via ECG before, during, and after every second therapy session.
- Selected moments of interest (MOI) are micro-analysed using an interpretative phenomenological approach.
- Salivary oxytocin (N=30) is assessed pre- and post-session in the first (T1) and the final (T10) sessions to investigate within-session changes across time.

Ultimately, the results will be triangulated to provide an integrative understanding of interpersonal synchrony within the music therapeutic triad.

**Current state of the study:** The sub-study starts in April 2026.

**Topic for the presentation:** Presentation of the research design, with the aim of refining it through discussion.

## Tim Trevor-Briscoe: Music Therapy Integration in Healthcare: Between Institutional Rhythms and Professional Agency

**Supervisor:** Prof.ssa Barbara Zanchi, Conservatorio Maderna-Lettimi di Cesena-Rimini, Italy

**Working title:** Music Therapy Integration in Healthcare: Between Institutional Rhythms and Professional Agency — Negotiating the institutional recognition of a professional identity grounded in the clinical ontology of music therapy: a Constructivist Grounded Theory study of music therapy integration in Italian healthcare institutions

**Background:** Music therapy (MT) is increasingly present in Italian healthcare settings, yet its integration remains unevenly structured. Music therapists face persistent challenges related to how their professional identity is comprehended, how their clinical work is authorised, and whether the recognition they build is durable or person-contingent. The study proceeds from the observation that a gap exists between the established ontological distinctiveness of MT — within the profession, training and literature — and the epistemological horizon of healthcare institutions, which may often lack the frameworks required to receive that distinction.

**Research focus:** Exploring how music therapists negotiate the institutional recognition of a professional identity grounded in the clinical ontology of music therapy, and the institutional conditions, integration processes, and recognition outcomes which structure that negotiation.

**Methodology:** Constructivist Grounded Theory following (Charmaz), proceeding from data comprising in-depth interviews with music therapists working in the Italian healthcare contexts of paediatric oncology and adult hospice, with staff interviews planned for the main sampling stage. To date, four MT semi-structured interviews have been carried out and analysed through initial, focused, and theoretical coding, comparative analysis, and memo writing. Sensitising concepts (Blumer) — theoretical orientations that guide analytic attention without determining its outcome — are used to guide the interview framework, and to open inquiry into institutional conditions, legitimacy, intersubjective and relational processes, and the organisation of time.

**Current state of the study:** Through abductive and iterative analysis, seven analytic categories emerged across the four interviews: three institutional conditions — Gatekeeping, Entry Pathway, Temporal Structure; one central mechanism — Integration Labour; two recognition-related outcomes — Visibility & Legitimacy, Professional Agency; and one configurational outcome — Mode of Integration. The interaction between these categories was analysed discursively, and the current theoretical model illustrates key structural relationships and recursive feedback dynamics. The study is currently preparing for the main sampling stage.

**Topic for the presentation:** The presentation will introduce the theoretical model and the recursive dynamics of its seven categories, discuss the ontology/epistemology gap, and invite discussion on the analytical decisions that shaped the current model. A productive horizon for future theoretical development draws inspiration from the researcher's reflexive stance, which is increasingly informed by the understanding of musical identity as embodied, situated, and dynamic (see MacDonald & Saarikallio's Musical Identities in Action framework). The substantive theory under development may eventually point toward a broader formal theory, concerning the recursive dynamics that emerge when a type of practice with a specific ontological mode encounters a housing institution with misaligned epistemic frameworks.

## Tobias Kranz: Ego state-based music therapy (ESMT) for depression – update and data analysis

### **Supervisors:**

Prof. Dr. Dorothee von Moreau, University for Music and Drama Hamburg

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**Titel of the study:** Ego state-based music therapy for depression

**Background/Context:** The thesis aims to integrate ego state therapy (EST), an inner part work model, into music therapy and to find approaches to integrate this concept into the multimodal treatment approach in the clinical setting of a psychotherapeutic ward. Despite some published research, a concept linking both methods is still to be developed. Nothing can be found dealing with this topic in scientific literature in English.

In addition, there are indicators for possible synergies with trauma-focused approaches. Psychodynamic approaches see the roots of depressive disorders in attachment and early experiences of loss. Working with younger inner parts in conjunction with music therapy could be an effective method to improve self-worth through self-soothing and self-compassion. This enhanced access in the sense of a musical bridge to the inner system promotes integration by building a cooperating network of inner parts.

**Research questions:** Can EST be transferred to music therapy? What are the challenges and opportunities? How does EST work in music therapy?

What are the benefits?

**Research design:** Mixed-method design

**Method:** The three-phase structure of this model is as follows: a method development phase, a testing phase, and a feasibility study with a mixed-methods design in a music therapy solo setting. The ESMT method is based on the hypothesis development of EST as proposed by Kai Fritzsche, ESMT supervision, extensive literature research, seven expert interviews, and a focus group discussion.

**Current state of the study:** The collection of data was finished in January 2026. The analysis of data is still in process. This PhD project will be finalised by summer 2027.

**Topic for the presentation:** After a short introduction, and an in-a-nutshell background and methodology, the focus will be on the first results and the further process of data analysis.