



World Federation of Music Therapy
Federación Mundial de Musicoterapia

Supporting Music Therapy Worldwide

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25. ANNIVERSARY OF WFMT

Celebrate With Us

Share your wishes, thoughts, and stories

Events

- January: Online Guest Book
- February: Historical Aspects of WFMT
- March: Slideshow: WFMT Events
- April: Student Surprise
- May: Cocktail Party in Spain
- June: Article by Regional Liaisons
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- December: Highlights of the Year



Historical Aspects of WFMT: Three Core Questions for Seven Presidents

As part of the 25. Anniversary celebrations, I would like to feature historical aspects of the World Federation of Music Therapy and honor the founders and all colleagues who contributed to the development and growth of the organization. Gratitude goes to the seven former WFMT Presidents who passionately brought in their ideas and vision for the global development of music therapy. To learn more about their accomplishments, remarkable moments and wishes, I asked Roland Benenzon, Ruth Bright, Cheryl Dileo, Tony Wigram, Denise Grocke, Suzanne Hanser, and Gabriela Wagner the following three questions:

1. What was the WFMT Council's most important achievement under your Presidency?
2. What is a moment to remember for you as former WFMT President?
3. What are your wishes for the 25. Anniversary of WFMT?

Additionally, I have prepared a table listing all colleagues who have served on the WFMT Council for download as a pdf. Should some information be incorrect or missing, I kindly ask you to contact me. Please don't forget to sign our 25. Anniversary online guestbook and tell us about your achievements, moments to remember, and wishes for WFMT.

Yours,

Dr. Petra Kern, MT-DMtG, MT-BC, MTA, NICU-MT
President, World Federation of Music Therapy
Email: president@wfmt.info

WFMT Council 1985-2010
Compiled by Dr. Petra Kern, 1.2010
President, World Federation of Music Therapy

Year	1985-1987	1988-1990	1991-1993	1994-1996	1997-1999	2000-2002	2003-2005	2006-2008	2009-2010
President	Dr. Roland Benenzon (Germany)	Dr. Ruth Bright (Australia)	Dr. Cheryl Dileo (USA)	Dr. Tony Wigram (UK)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Suzanne Hanser (USA)	Dr. Gabriela Wagner (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)
President Elect	Dr. Suzanne Hanser (USA)	Dr. Gabriela Wagner (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Tony Wigram (UK)	Dr. Ruth Bright (Australia)	Dr. Roland Benenzon (Germany)	Dr. Cheryl Dileo (USA)	Dr. Ruth Bright (Australia)
Secretary	Dr. Suzanne Hanser (USA)	Dr. Gabriela Wagner (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Tony Wigram (UK)	Dr. Ruth Bright (Australia)	Dr. Roland Benenzon (Germany)	Dr. Cheryl Dileo (USA)	Dr. Ruth Bright (Australia)
Executive Director	N/A	N/A	Ms. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)	Dr. Petra Kern (USA)	Dr. Denise Grocke (USA)

WFMT Council 1985-2010

1.



[1985-1990]

Dr. Rolando Benenzon

Question 1: Two fundamental objectives existed for me when I became the first President of the World Federation of Music Therapy:

1. Integrating the greatest number of representatives from around the world

5.



[1999-2002]

Dr. Denise Grocke

Question 1: One of the first items of business that the WFMT Council addressed when I took over the Presidency in 1999, was to embrace the Internet. We had been in consultation with Professor Dr. David Aldridge at Witten-Herdecke about the musictherapyworld website that he established at the University there, and WFMT's site was subsequently run from Witten-Herdecke for many years. This was an

2. Creating, above all, a manual of norms to develop our practice as music therapy educators, servants, and investigators.

It was very interesting that during the structuring of the rules we began to join all the logos and symbols that consisted of all the music therapy associations in the world. Observing through them how the symbolized music (logos) applied to health, the concept of music, and the concept of medicine, truly metaphorical, that it already demonstrated the beginning of transitioning from an interdisciplinary walk contrasting with a philosophical one.

Question 2: As former President, the richest moments were the experiences shared during the meetings to finalize the creation of the World Federation during the fourth World Congress in Paris, the fifth world congress in Italy, and finally during the sixth world congress in Rio de Janeiro where I left the Council.

There were moments of great emotional and interdisciplinary exchange because the music therapy pioneers in each country were derived from such diverse training programs, music, education, psychology, medicine, and art, to just name a few.

Question 3: My desire for the future of music therapy is that inside the heart of the World Federation or Music Therapy exists a work commission that studies the possibility to break the limitations of the name of the discipline, "music therapy" in order to surpass the term "music" and to transcend toward the field of non-verbal resources.

Translated from Spanish to English by Christopher Combie.
(WFTM Publication Commission)

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[1990-1993]

2. Ruth Bright

Questions 1: I think the communication between Council Members was amongst the most important aspects of life (hard to imagine now what it was like without Email. But I know that some people were better than others about answering letters!)

Probably the continuing development of the various commissions was a key matter. The education discussions are what comes to mind most clearly - whether it would be possible to establish a worldwide standard of professional competence so that registration could be transferable from one place to another, and - more importantly - so that we all meant (more or less) the same thing when we spoke of "music therapy." I was very aware that different countries had different standards of professionalism, different understanding of research methods and validity etc. - that was apparent in the disparity of conference presentations and also from the discussions that took place after papers were given.

Eventually, it was decided that it was impossible to establish a universal standard that the situation would continue of some countries or groups regarding some interventions and/or activities as "therapy," which others would describe as "recreation." Also the theoretical and philosophical bases for music therapy vary greatly not only between countries but between practitioners in any one country (i.e., behavioral, psychoanalytical and so forth). Some of us contributed detailed notes to the individual's Clinical Records but others do not. Some of us do detailed scientific research, others do not. The standards and approaches of practical music also vary greatly: Some see improvisation as the only real means to therapy - with the need for great practical competence in playing an instrument, others use recorded music from time to time with discussion of the music and its meaning for the listener, songwriting is used in many different approaches and so on.

It may not sound much of an achievement to decide that something could NOT be done! But it led to a deeper understanding of the tremendous scope of music as a means to therapy, and a greater understanding perhaps of what we mean by "therapy": For some people it can be a support in coping with an unchangeable situation of disability for others it can contribute to a "cure," as in some forms of mental illness. But it is all therapy! We felt less disappointed than we might have felt because we knew that medical practitioners have no universal standard - what is acceptable in one country as a qualification leading to registration is often not acceptable in another part of the world! So we were content to accept that we do not all think the same way about music therapy, nor practice it in the same way - but what we do all share is the aim of using music to help people to cope with difficult life situations, meeting their physical, mental social, and/or spiritual needs!

important achievement because one of the most important roles of WFMT was to disseminate information about music therapy throughout the world, such as conferences, new books, training programs etc. Prior to the Internet WFMT had produced hard-copy newsletters that were sent to each member country to be distributed. Gianluigi di Franco had been Chair of publications and in collaboration with Ismez in Italy had produced beautiful newsletters of high quality. But once we had the website up and running, all the news could be disseminated more immediately via the web. Registration for the 2002 Congress in England for example was done for the first time through the internet, so this truly was an important achievement for the WFMT.

The second most important achievement was the 2-day symposium that I organized while still Chair of the Education and Training Commission to determine worldwide standards for the training of music therapists. The two-day event was held prior to the Congress in Washington in 1999, and was attended by representatives of the member countries. Together, we fleshed out a statement that incorporated all the main aspects of education and training. I remember we were all very excited to find that the term "bio-psychosocial" in relation to patients needs was a recognized term in all our countries. The "standards" document is actually quite short; we all agreed it would be too difficult to determine specific hours of education and training in all aspects of music therapy, so the final document was quite succinct.

Question 2: For me, I think the 2002 Congress in Oxford, England, was the highlight of my Presidency. The Oxford environment alone, being so steeped in history, was a truly stimulating place to be. I also remember that the English music therapists were very friendly and helpful as we walked to different venues through the lanes of Oxford. The theme was "Dialogue and Debate," and each Keynote address had respondents who added their views to what had been said in the Keynote address. There was also a humorous debate, complete with heckling as I recall, on the question "will music therapy survive the next century."

Question 3: WFMT continues to hold an important role as the only worldwide organization representing music therapy. It's key function these days is to organize the congress and to insure that the different continents of the world are given the opportunity to host a congress, thereby enabling that country to promote the field. I believe that is the WFMT's most important role for the future.



[2002-2005]

6. Dr. Suzanne Hanser

Question 1: The World Congress in Brisbane, Australia, was a crowning event during my Presidency. Our Australian hosts organized a magnificent program and it was a joy to meet and work with the very fine Australian music therapy community.

Question 2: The Town Hall in Oxford, England, was a magnificent venue for the World Congress. We closed one of the final sessions by singing a major chord, along with dissonances and passing tones by congress delegates that still ring in my ears - a symbol of harmony, creativity, and originality.

Question 3: I wish that WFMT could forge a model of peace-building by being an example of how cultures the world over can create and make music in order to engender unity and solidarity amongst people of every shape, size, and background.



[2005-2008]

7. Gabriela Wagner

Questions 1: Being President of the WFMT was an exciting and fulfilling experience. Nonetheless, it was very demanding and only due to a lot of work we could achieve the goals we set forth under my Presidency. I can say that the organization of the 12th World Congress of Music Therapy, which took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina and the related academic works published, were the Council's most important achievement during those years. It was at the 11th World Congress of Music Therapy in Brisbane, Australia that I was elected as WFMT President and that the Argentine proposal for the 12th World Congress

Question 2: A key moment in my term as President was probably when we gathered for the Congress in Spain and I saw that we had made progress - simultaneous translation of papers into a few different languages, people at the Congress from all over the world, solid research being reported, good discussion after papers from an informed audience, and so on.

Probably we all take that for granted now (except for the simultaneous translation, which is not always used) but I felt that the WFMT was making its mark in the world as an international body.

Question 3: The answer really follows on from what I wrote above. I hope that WFMT continues to be universal, with equal representation from all the member nations, with all schools of music therapy being acceptable to the membership, free of what we would call 'one-up-manship' - that may not be universally understood - so perhaps you had better change it to something more easily understood. Pride in our achievements but not contentious pride, avoiding thoughts such as "We're more therapeutic in our work and research than you are!"



[1993-1996]

3. Dr. Cheryl Dileo

Question 1: There were a number of important achievements, I believe, during my Presidency. I'll name just several:

1. The WFMT became a non-profit organization,
2. the Council expanded to include representatives from 4 areas of the globe
3. the WFMT member voting procedures were established, enabling each country to have one vote, and
4. there was active work by the Council and its commissions, in particular, the Commission on Education and Training. I also maintained regular communication with the Council on a monthly basis via letter and fax. Our communication was excellent, even before the advent of the internet. I was also able to travel to various parts of the world to meet with Council members during my term, so the Council members were well informed of all that was happening with the WFMT and had direct input. In addition, I was able to meet with WFMT members in different parts of the world and cultivate a keen awareness of and appreciation for differences in music therapy practice as they related to culture.

Question 2: Although I served as WFMT President from 1993-1996, I also served as an active member of the Council for 18 years from 1990-2008 in various capacities as well as Business Manager of the WFMT.

During my term, and especially during my meetings with Council members in various parts of the world, I felt that the WFMT became a truly international organization with concern for its members in those countries that most needed the support of the organization. Thus, the WFMT was focused on providing support through its development of various model guidelines that could be used in moving the profession ahead. At the same time, I felt this international organization as a family. The members of the Council at that time were truly so, and this for me was the most gratifying aspect of my Presidency.

Question 3: I hope that the focus of the WFMT will always be on service to members in countries that need its support.



[1996-1999]

4. Dr. Tony Wigram

Question 1: The development of the glamorous Newsletter inspired by Guanluigi di Franco in conjunction with Ismez. On the commissions expanding the membership with regional representation, an inclusive program at grass roots level. I made closer connections between WFMT and specific countries. At that time we had a close connection between WFMT, European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC), and SAMT (South American Music Therapy Committee).

President and that the Argentine proposal for the 12th World Congress of Music Therapy was accepted. I will never forget the sound of the voices announcing both events and the joyful moments of celebration.

Those were indeed hectic days for me as the original Argentinean proposal did not include my role as Chair of the 12th World Congress of Music Therapy. But different circumstances required me to make that decision. I could successfully serve in this double role thanks to those who also donated their time and efforts. As President of the WFMT, I shared the Council with Suzanne Hanser, Petra Kern, Cheryl Dileo, Nobuko Saji, Susan Coull, David Aldridge, Lucanne Magill, Patricia Sabbatella, Mayra Hugo, Joerg Fachner, Monika Noecker-Ribaupierre, Barbara Wheeler, Marly Chagas, Sigeaki Hinohara, Mohan Sundararaj, and Tian Gao.

The Council worked together with the World Congress Committee formed by Horacio Cárdenas Rivarola and María Fernanda Rodríguez representatives of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Alicia Topelberg (President) and Gabriel Federico (Treasurer) from the Argentine Association of Music Therapy (ASAM), the International Scientific Committee, and other members of additional committees. I regret not being able to include every person, but their names can be found in the documents of the conference. Notable achievements of the WFMT Council and the World Congress Committee include:

- Offering different registration fees from countries with lower annual per capita income in order to ensure access to the Congress to many music therapists
- Offering for the first time in the history of the WFMT World Congress bilingual congress proceedings (English and Spanish) to the delegates during the event, and
- Offering a "Music Therapy Hosting Program" to foreign participants. Hence, we significantly reduced expenses for attending the congress while giving the opportunity to network and make acquaintances from around the world.

Gratitude goes to an exceptional Council who worked together with the Argentine members of the International Scientific Committee coordinated by the extraordinary team formed by Amelia Ferraggina and Cristina Zamani and all other remarkable persons who worked with them. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Petra Kern for her outstanding organizational talent and creative skills in promoting the World Congress of Music Therapy.

Question 2: As with all events of such magnitude, during the organization of the 12th World Congress there were some wonderful moments to remember and some challenges to face. One of the most exciting moments was holding the first postcard announcing the 12th World Congress, designed by Dr. Petra Kern, in my hands. I am very pleased to recall the great variety and high scientific level of the presentations, and the unique excitement in exchanging experiences and approaches to music, sound and therapy. Moreover, meeting old friends and making new ones, singing old songs and learning new ones, are some of the things I appreciate most every time I attend a World Congress. Particularly, the 12th World Congress' opening and the closing ceremonies were remarkable. Standing at the university lobby, listening to people from so many different cultures, talking in various languages, still sounds like music to my ears.

Questions 3: First of all let's make a toast for the next 25 years of the WFMT, in a world that needs music and music therapists. I think that the most useful way of putting wishes is in the form of making suggestions. Thus here are mine:

- to create a mechanism that will allow all interested parties to access information about the World Congress
- to evaluate the viability and convenience of creating a fund that will allow to give financial support to the organizing committee of the World Congresses
- to continue being flexible and adapt to the future challenges arising in the global development of music therapy.

Finally, I would like to share my happiness and congratulate all Council members who are currently involved in the exciting developments and innovations of the World Federation of Music Therapy.

Additional Historical Information

A series of interviews about the World Congresses of Music Therapy can be found at www.voices.no

Brief summary of the history of WFMT up to July 2008. Download: [Summary until 2008 \(pdf\)](#)

Grocke, D. (2005). Reflections on World Congresses in Music Therapy. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*. Retrieved July 2008, from <http://www.voices.no/columnist/colgrocke230505.html>

[Download this article as pdf file](#)

WFMT was a formalized organization. My work in developing the EMTC was bringing in all the countries of Europe that had training and practices. The EMTC was working on research registers and Constitution. A pattern of congresses was emerging with a 3-year cycle of WFMT congress and EMTC in intervention years and local regional congresses in the intervening years (e.g., Nordic conferences). There was an emerging movement of research supporting evidence based practice, which began in the mid 1990s. Leuven 1998, 1997 conference in Los Angeles, and 1998 Music Medicine in Melbourne. During my Presidency the huge impact of the world wide web and beginning of the world wide web.

Question 2: A major achievement was the planning of the World Congress in Washington, the biggest congress of WFMT with 2400 participants, which included over 700 people from outside the USA. At the EMTC congress in 1998 in Leuven there were discussions about the models of music therapy. Initially, there were three, and I influenced this to be five models: Behavioral music therapy and the Benenzon Model along with Mary Priestley's Analytical Music Therapy, Nordoff-Robbins' Creative Music Therapy, and the Bonny Method of Guided Imaginary and Music. I felt we achieved greater communication, stronger networks, expanded commissions, greater connections through visiting countries in Europe, USA, and Australia. I served the WFMT since 1983, when the French first drew up the concept of the world organization. I felt myself as a red thread running through the concept. I began with the process in July 1983 – I proposed who should serve on the first committee. I suggested we make a working party of those who were interested in this: Ruth Bright (Australia), Rolando Benenzon (Argentina), and Otto Moll (Germany), Darko Breitenfeld (Yugoslavia), Amelia Oldfield (UK) and myself (UK). This was the group that started the first work and took their discussion to Rio de Janeiro.

Question 3: To continue to develop a congress every three years and to facilitate international communication

The screenshot shows the WFMT website's 25th anniversary page. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, 25 Anniversary Events, WFMT Music Therapy, About WFMT, Leadership, Membership, Past Presidents, Governance, Regional Information, WFMT for Students, and Job Opportunities. Below the navigation is the main heading '25. ANNIVERSARY OF WFMT Celebrate With Us' with the tagline 'Share your wisdom, thoughts, and stories'. The central content area features a large article titled 'Historical Aspects of WFMT: Three Core Questions for Seven Presidents'. The article text begins with 'As part of the 25th anniversary celebrations, a committee has been formed to explore the historical aspects of the World Federation of Music Therapy and to share the wisdom and experiences of its members...'. Below the article, there are two numbered sections: '1. The Benenzon Question' and '5. The Bonny Question'. To the right of the article is a sidebar with 'Events' and a 'WFMT Council 1988-2012' calendar.

Suggested citation

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