



SOUND AND PSYCHE

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INTERVIEW
WITH



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OF MUSIC THERAPY FOR THE VIII. CONGRESS 1996

QUESTIONS
BY



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V Deau and
V poster about

Sound and Psyche - an „Earth Congress“

Interview with Prof. Hans-Helmut Decker-Voigt, Ph.D. (Dr. phil), M.A., Director of the Institute for Music Therapy at Hamburg College of Music and General Chairman of the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) for the VIIIth Congress in 1996.

Dr

Volker Bernius of the Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt/Main, conducted the interview.

Prof. Decker-Voigt, in July 1996 the VIIIth International World Congress for Music Therapy will be taking place in Hamburg. You're pulling the strings for this event. What, briefly, is your greatest hope and biggest worry about 1996 - about an event taking place for the first time in Germany?

You use the image of the „strings“ I'm pulling.

Well, to stick with this metaphor, I see these „strings“, or you could say „wires“, as the many countries and groups of colleagues who will be coming to Hamburg with their own well established music-therapy profiles.

My greatest hope is that the five days of the VIIIth World Congress will be the vehicle for numerous planned and improvised cross-wire encounters that give us insights and overviews to take us further in this field - and not just a higher frequency of congress-event interactions, the like of which I often experience at medical congresses, for example.

I am cultivating this hope all the more because after the political upheavals of recent years, several countries of the former Eastern Block will be able to attend a world music therapy congress for the first time. For first encounters you need a particularly „communication-friendly setting“. My preparatory travels to these countries, which in music-therapy terms are at least „new“ to me, serve precisely this purpose.

I feel that the precondition for such „cross-wire encounters“, i.e. bringing people together, is to be found in generous hospitality gladly given by us German colleagues. And ever since our National Committee was set up last April with colleagues from eastern and western Germany working constructively together, I have noticed a great, and growing, motivation to do just that.

My greatest worry is that the extremely hybrid term „World“ Congress could scare people off. I would be quite happy with „Earth

Congress". The hybrid aspect could even be intensified by the impressive facilities of the internationally renowned Congress Centrum Hamburg (CCH) where some of our (German) colleagues find it hard to imagine events that are in tune with the intimate, immanent character of music therapy. But as far as this worry of mine is concerned, I am quite happy to follow Mark Twain who said, „I've been worried about a lot of things in my life - and most of them haven't happened." I have also been of good hope since I realized that most of my fears, fortunately, can be corrected by us hosts.

So let's make things as gemütlich as possible in the big CCH for us and our guests from probably more than 40 countries. It's no coincidence that we Germans know so much about gemütlichkeit that the word has proved untranslatable or has already passed into the English language.

International world congresses organized by the WFMT take place every three years. The last one was held in Vittoria, Spain in 1993. So in 1996 it is, rather unusually, again taking place in a European country. Why this interruption in the „continental switch“ that is customary for international congresses?

When I travelled to Vittoria in summer 1993 with a variety of invitations (from Hamburg's Senate as the City-State's government, from the President of our College of Music and from the Congress Centrum Hamburg) to „pitch“ for the congress, I did not expect Hamburg to be playing host before 2002 because Australia had been announced for 1996 and the USA for 1999. So I went there in a relaxed mood along the lines of „enjoy yourself in Spain and maybe do some international work at a much later date“. What I did not know was that Australia had already had to withdraw its invitation for 1996 - for reasons unknown to me. So to my great surprise, the Presiding Committee of the World Federation of Music Therapy was extremely receptive when a colleague from Germany (with official backing at that!) joined the queue for one of the future congresses.

I was asked to come to the front of the queue, and that's the reason why two world congresses after another in our field are being staged in Europe.

Why Hamburg? Who took the initiative here? And another question: what opportunities do Hamburg's politicians, academics, musicians and the Congress Centrum Hamburg (CCH) see in staging this Congress?

The initiative came from Hamburg - an idea that simultaneously bore fruit at several places in Hamburg.

Historically speaking, Hamburg made the first attempts to establish music therapy as a „faculty“ at a state-run college in the early 1970s.

This was undertaken at the initiative of Hermann Rauhe, who was President of Hamburg College of Music then and now, and as a result of his connections to those responsible for educational policy in Hamburg. The then appointed Professor of Music Therapy (then the only „music-therapy civil servant“), my predecessor Johannes Th. Eschen, became a personal guarantee for the attractiveness of music therapy in Hamburg, and thus to the Department of Science and Art and the responsible Senators (as Hamburg calls it Ministers). For some time now, those responsible for us in Hamburg politics and the public authorities are well aware of how interesting an „orchid“ has been cultivated in the first highly official state-owned „flower-bed“ Hamburg provided.

In the meantime I have, with increasing frequency, seen the interest, and sometimes even the pride, of some „true“ Hamburgers in having played a pioneering role in the seemingly exotic field of today's music psychotherapy. After all, Hamburg loves to play a pioneering role. That is one reason I see and so I am not surprised that the Congress Centrum Hamburg (CCH) spent two whole years repeatedly knocking on my door and asking whether I wouldn't be interested in a world congress for reasons of institute politics ...

The second reason is probably that during this same period, CCH discovered a new „clientele“: health congresses and congresses for the medical professions. Thus, Hamburg has in the meantime staged the World Cancer Congress (with 10,000 participants), the Congress for Care Personnel, the World Congress for Social Psychiatry and the International Psychotherapy Congress (which is taking place now at the same time as I am answering your questions on the coast of Brittany).

After the experience hitherto gained in working with those responsible at CCH - the Head of the Congress Organisation Department, Mr Rieger, and „my“ project-management team made up of Ms Seeland with her assistants Ms Heymann and Ms Derstappen - I am extremely impressed by the interest CCH has shown in the contents of our Congress! Our CCH „Music Therapy World Congress Team“ has turned out to be a most committed and curious group whose members I have already invited to a concert of free improvisation at our College of Music. I have also been asked to „floor“ them for a session of deep-relaxation therapy!

The interest shown by the CCH team has helped me digest the realization that, as a business enterprise, CCH has to think about money, or at least its turnover ... But back to Hamburg in particular:

„Hamburg“ is actually an abstract term - Hamburg is a state, a city and sometimes, amazingly, a village. The latter exemplified by the short distances between the various state departments which, for example, facilitated my applications for subsidies from the City-State of Hamburg and my high-level begging for sponsors. Such short distances make it easy, or easier than elsewhere, to find the motivation for a World Congress for Music Therapy and make it clear (to me) that Hamburg sees everything through politically responsible spectacles.

„Oh yes, your colleagues from the former Eastern Block countries are going to be there for the first time“ is something I hear quite often and then see how the support comes because Hamburg feels a certain responsibility arising from its particular location at the cross-roads of East and West on the one hand and its Hanseatic cosmopolitanism on the other.

All this is not some specific interest in music therapy such as is the case with the CCH team. It is a fundamental interest.


Last year Cheryl Maranto, President of the World Federation of Music Therapy, published a book in which representatives of 41 countries described the status and development of music therapy in their respective countries. One noticeable feature is that Germany is missing - opted out (almost like at the last World Congress in Spain).

Cheryl Maranto's book was indeed a terrible reflection of „the“ German involvement at an international level. But we „opted out“ ourselves. Cheryl Maranto told me with unabated amazement that she had tried several times to obtain a contribution on the German music-therapy scene.

So are international developments bypassing Germany?

I don't think we're „out“ or that international developments have sped past us. And I don't believe that the mere fact that we are hosting the VIIIth World Congress will bring or has brought about an upswing. On the contrary, individual colleagues have had sound contacts with other countries, for example Isabelle Frohne who has frequently attended international congresses.

And then there is Johannes Th. Eschen who has continued to cultivate his earlier contacts as evidenced by the European Research Register published in Holland by Henk Smeijsters (NL) and Penny Rogers (UK) in which Eschen is responsible for the German-language section.



What's more, the German-language research report is one of the longest in the book.

After all, it's no coincidence that even before Vittoria and the decision to let us host the 1996 Congress, the DGMT represented by Frank Mecklenbeck was energetically demanding music therapy's inclusion in the international academic database DICS. Another example: industrious travellers in matters to do with artistic psychotherapy such as the Swiss-American Paolo J. Knill with his lectures at German colleges have also guaranteed a flow of information between Germany, German-language music therapy and other countries which helped avoid our falling below an embarrassingly shameful minimum.

From a current perspective these are, in my view, signs of German music therapy's tentative advance onto the international scene, and they started some time ago. However, hosting the World Congress is an unexpectedly strong boost in this progress. And it is also an obligation.

The first international activities by German music therapists have already begun, possibly as a result of the decision to hold the 1996 Congress in Hamburg. For example, I met Monika Nöcker-Ribaupierre from Munich at the pre-conference on Capri at the end of May. She was the official joint delegate of the DGMT and DBVMT. And Almut Seidel of Frankfurt recently promised to join the WFMT International Commission which under the chairmanship of our Dutch colleague Henk Smeijsters is responsible, along with me, for coordinating the European and overseas congress contributions. The National Committee is responsible for the host's contributions and a basic structure for which it can request additional foreign contributions.

These could be signals of a crescendo in German music therapy's international ties. But if you haven't been involved in developments, you surely need to catch up on what's going on in different schools of music therapy ...

I have noticed how modest the German contributions have hitherto been not only to foreign but also to other music-therapy developments, e.g. the exciting advances in Eastern Europe of which I had hardly heard anything before I became Chairman. It is possible that my listing of such soothing signals of awakening in Germany reflects my unease at the fact that from a foreign point of view there is really very little of German origins in music therapy.

Back to the reason for your question, Cheryl Maranto's book. It is tragic and at the same time amusing that several authors in that book mention music therapy in pre-unification West Germany as important and


pioneering but none „of us“ contributes directly. As far as West Germany is concerned, this book does reveal a one-way-street communication structure which we can only improve or even effectively rearrange through our responsibility for this Congress.


I consider the job of hosting this Congress as a clear appeal to us from the rest of the world. After all, the decision was taken by an internationally staffed WFMT body which was curious and open in its host invitation to reunified Germany with its different schools of music therapy. Sometimes I think that the rest of the world wouldn't have got to know us for several more years if it hadn't encouraged us to host the 1996 event. To a certain extent, the whole thing was organized along the lines of „if you want to get to know somebody, invite him in“. Old Perls would have been delighted to see such confirmation of his views and teaching about the success or failure of contacts!

What I feel is particularly remarkable about this invitation to host the 1996 Congress is that nobody has been resentful because of our earlier passiveness, of which there was plenty. On the contrary. In virtually all the countries whose music-therapy representatives I've visited and invited, I felt „the friendly spirit of a future guest“. By the way, Cheryl Maranto herself is equally warm-hearted in such visits and invitations. Instead of keeping her distance (or worse) as the author of a book scorned by several Germans she invited to contribute, she is writing an overview of international music-therapy goings-on for our first German-language „Lexikon Musiktherapie“ (which will be published by Hegrefe Verlag für Psychologie in time for the Congress). So that we Germans, who need to catch up on developments, get a convenient summary ...

Why are Germans so lacking in interest in international developments? Are they so concerned about their own „house“? Or are they incapable of taking in any more?

You'd need a long essay, or even several books, to answer that one. All I can give you are some areas to focus on ...

6  The first is that the history of German psychotherapy was abruptly interrupted by the emigration of many important psychoanalysts (and indeed psychotherapy in its entirety) from Nazi Germany. It was not taken up again until many years after the War. So whereas music therapy in, for example, the USA or Argentina has profited from the on-going development of psychotherapy, e.g. through humanistic psychotherapy, we in Germany need development aid in every respect. And particularly in coming to terms with our feelings of guilt (cf. Horst Eberhard Richter's „Die Deutsche Neurose“) besides which an extensive development of psychoanalytical influenced music therapy could hardly flourish. In general



psychotherapy and in music therapy we took years to realize that the 1933-45 period had left us with a deficit we could not make good.

It was only after a period of consolidation in the West German psychotherapy landscape that music therapy could begin to develop and then make great strides.

A second area to focus on is the following, and indeed a (psycho)logical consequence of the first:

The stormy development years of music therapy (a generalizing plural) were influenced by music therapists of several different schools: analytical, gestalt therapy-oriented, anthroposophical and therapeutic-pedagogical music therapy to name but a few.

And what happens in such stormy development years with various schools of thought in a discipline as sensitive as ours, and one that was also taken possession of by medicine, psychology and art? There are, or rather there were, correspondingly stormy „ideological“ battles which are required to produce the necessary profiles. In development psychology terms, you could say that with the „parental background“ of our past, we went through a particularly long adolescence ...

I think we needed this time to develop our profile(s) and so didn't have much energy left for the outside world. And those of us who studied abroad (me, for example) hardly invested any time at home during our period abroad (well anyway I didn't).

During the past five years we have seen the development of a pretty clearly structured landscape in music therapy (if we take the establishment and inflation in the number of state- and privately run training courses as a superficial indicator). But still there has been no clear indication of any receptiveness for or curiosity about music therapy abroad.

Well, the past five years in Germany have been characterized by a stormy East-West development, and we'll probably need another five years to reach a better understanding. Do you see any beginnings of this?

All of us in Germany experienced the Wende (the events of 1989-90).

After all, the Wende didn't just affect the rest of society but us as well - indeed it noticeably and quickly affected the sensitive music-therapy scene which had just begun to settle down a bit in the west. There were no disappointments about the sequences of events in the process of „inner reunification“ which music therapy, as a group in society, did not experience. No handicaps, no trouble, no consternation, no shock we

music therapists in east or west didn't experience in the same way as all other groups in society!

Sometimes - that's what we've learnt - special sensitivity for and perception of others require us to come to terms with complex problems.

Nowadays, in view of some initially over-enthusiastically hopeful expectations (around 1989) and the correspondingly painful experiences of encountering our colleagues in eastern Germany, there is nothing I am more thankful for than the chance to play a truly authentic pan-German host role in 1996. The main addressee for my thanks is Christoph Schwabe who represents the many colleagues in eastern Germany - gratitude that the necessary disappointments brought on by the Wende have not affected the motivation for this first major pan-German music-therapy project.

In view of some discussions between east and west German music-therapy positions (e.g. in the run-up to German conventions or in readers' letters to MU), I was uncertain for a while whether we would manage to set up a truly „National“ Committee in time. Or whether we would need more time for inner-German debates, which are of course a precondition for coming together in a host role.


This is one worry I've no longer got. But I am happy to admit that I set myself one precondition for our host role - that it had to be supported by music therapists in eastern and western Germany. If we had not succeeded in achieving the degree of consensus required for such a world congress, I wouldn't have thought us or myself capable of such a host role and handed back, or at least passed on, the invitation.

Now after numerous conversations on this „complex issue“ and with an eye to this extremely complicated background, I see our host role for the World Congress as a great opportunity. And between trips and the sober, everyday work of structuring the Congress, I sometimes cultivate a vision that this host role arrived at just the right time. And that it was no coincidence at all that it fell into our laps.

Just think of the story of how we came to get the Congress which you asked about at the beginning of this interview.

Or to finish this aspect with an analogy I've heard from many therapy colleagues: some relationship-related problems are pushed into the background by a joint project (the infamous case of „building a home of our own“ or the child who is supposed to mend a relationship) only to metastasize until the house is finished (or the child born) and then everything turns out worse than ever.

But the joint responsibility for projects can cause some relationship problems to mutate into constructively critical solidarity. I would definitely allocate our 1996 host role to the latter category with regard to the inner-German consensus in music therapy.



Last but not least, I see, along with others, another reason for the relatively muted voice of German music therapy on the international scene up to now: the language barrier has probably played a role in our introverted past. I know several colleagues, not just myself, who are passionately, mostly lovingly, attached to their music and particularly their German language. Evidence is found, not least, in the books of some German music-therapy authors where they introduce plays-on-words in our German mother-tongue in similar fashion to the improvisation with the notes that mean the world to us.

I guess that some of us don't even dare to try foreign languages because we are paralyzed by a fear of disappointment. „There's no point in trying - I couldn't express myself or communicate in anywhere near the way I can in German.“ German perfectionism - just one of the reasons for such disappointment prophylaxis - is merely one chain of thought in my conjecture games: why did it turn out as it did?

As I said before, all this involves some projection on my part - but not just that. Nowadays I am discovering how interaction abroad can free a person from such language barriers - providing we forget our school English, French or Spanish and their categories of judging what is right or wrong.

Besides I also sing and improvise instrumentally with colleagues abroad and thus benefit from my own profession.

At the beginning of this interview you described a special aim of this Congress as furthering East-West dialogue, building East-West bridges and learning more about music therapy in Eastern Europe. Hamburg is intended to be a platform for corresponding developments in the East. You have told us about contacts to colleagues in Eastern European countries - have we underestimated Eastern Europe up to now, how has music therapy developed there and what new things will we be able to learn?

We, well I, didn't underestimate developments in the former Eastern Block countries - I didn't even look eastwards.

My horizons, and I think not just mine, did not go further than the music-therapy scene in East Germany, the old GDR.

As a student and then a college lecturer who had taught himself all he knew about music therapy, I had read Schwabe's books in detail, admiring them because they were the best-known ones in the late 1960s. By the way, the same is still true of Schwabe's books in the former Eastern Block countries where translations appeared. In the USA, too, „German

music therapy" is represented in some circles by Schwabe's music therapy and Ralph Spintge's medically oriented approach.

Only now on my travels through the countries of the former Eastern Block am I discovering just how limited my own horizons were - or to use a phrase common in my home state of Lower Saxony, „it didn't reach much further than the loo seat". The music-therapy work I saw in Hungary, especially in Debrecen - the songs alone - left me very enthusiastic. Fritz Hegi has come back from Pecs with similar reports.

Over the years I had forgotten or rather, influenced by the opposition to singing in school music lessons since 1968, put out of my mind just how therapeutic working with a patient on a song can be - a song where the words specifically reflect the patient's current life concept and can help to turn it round. In Poland and from Russian colleagues I have also heard a lot I can learn. I am very much looking forward to that in 1996 and want to make others curious, too.


Conversely, I also know that people view the well-known or supposed German music therapy with a certain amount of reverence and sometimes even fear. A congress such as our in 1996 can only enable us to learn from each other through diligent dialogue.

In 1995 there will be a European congress in Aalborg, Denmark where an initial East-West dialogue is certain to take place. But it will also cover much more ...

In 1996 we are not just striving for a West-East congress along the lines of creating bridges between the West and the countries of the former Eastern Block. Whereas I am personally inviting and trying to motivate the colleagues from Eastern Europe so that we can learn from each other, Cheryl Maranto is travelling to China and Japan to meet those interested in this World Congress there. So the Far East will also be represented.

Of course there are fewer psychodynamic and group-dynamic structural parallels between western (in particular German) music psychotherapy and the Far Eastern understanding of music therapy. But there are colleagues in the Far East who work in music therapy with equally old and proven repertoire steps and the values gained from experience. We should at least be in a position to get to know them in a spirit of curiosity and receptiveness. I only need to mention the catchwords Chinese medicine and music therapy or the possible links between acupuncture and natural medicine on the one hand and tonal art on the other. We can only learn from the holistic perspectives of Far Eastern medicine.

We can also learn from the music therapy practised in South America. The role played by dancing and movement is one which greatly



impresses me in its lack of self-consciousness. I am learning that music therapists sometimes need to learn that music has a positive effect in therapy - and not keep on reflecting in our therapy about why that is so.

On the other hand quite a few people complain about the need for more reflection; recently Spiegel quoted Grawe's Bern report and though superficial, the verdict was thus made available to the general public: „unsatisfactory performance“ was what that report said about the modern methods of psychotherapy as well as music therapy ...

We certainly do need to catch up with a lot of sound scientific work in the field of music therapy. But whereas we are now getting on with this with a good deal of success, and indeed need to get on with it, we should not forget or push out of our minds how pleasurable and liberating an experience music and dancing can be - without reflecting on the transference and counter-transference goings-on.

And it is precisely that which I experience in talking with South American colleagues who, by the way, also have a longer tradition of links to psychotherapy than we do - because of the 1933-45 period.

Up to now, I have preferred to spend time with American colleagues than Germans. In the USA I encounter the kind of curiosity among colleagues which may be verbalized as „Let me participate in the aspects of your work I know nothing about.“ And that's just what I do.

At European, or at least German congresses (in the medical, psychological and even music-therapy fields - at least when I used to attend them), I encounter more of the anxiety that others could know more, or different things, than I do ... And then the people go home full of enthusiasm because they have been confirmed in their belief that they don't need to learn or relearn anything new.

The motto of the Congress, „SOUND and PSYCHE“, does not permit a strong orientation towards the school of music therapy which debate and practice tend to emphasize in Germany: music psychotherapy.

I reacted differently when I heard the final motto that came out of a 20-minute, wonderfully associative brainstorming in our „coordinator triumvirate“ (Franz Mecklenburg, Till Menedoht and myself). Till Menedoht came up with „Sound and Psyche“ and we both felt that everything to do with music in the therapeutic treatment of people could be discovered under this „umbrella pair of words“: psychotherapy (our

understanding of it) and everything in the field of music therapies, which we in Germany do not think or perceive as „the“ music therapy.


In terms of my academic training I'm a psychologist and music therapist, and for this reason, and because of my present-day work as a music therapist in a German clinic, I'm a convinced „music psychotherapist“ with the exciting bunching of European psychoanalysis, American art therapy and humanistic psychology as my personal background. At present I feel good and certain with this identity. But during the past year's work for the World Federation I have learned a lot in addition. In terms of the international spectrum, we music psychotherapists are quite definitely the smaller group among the various existing, valid and extremely efficient music therapies. The more medically oriented music therapy of South America, e.g. Argentina, has alone shown me what a small group I belong to in Europe, and I have also learned how good persuasive work at conventions and congresses is - proselytizing attempts combined with the claim to absolute truth are a guarantee of non-integration into international music-therapy developments.

As a publisher I, too, fell into a trap - one which, internationally speaking, can only be a trap for us Germans - with my „Introduction to Music Therapy“. After all, pluralism - even in its confusing, redundant sense and not just as an enrichment - is apparent at any truly international meeting. Besides, in any discussion about music therapy and non-psychotherapeutic music therapy, I am reminded of Christoph Schwabe's view. Rightly and with the experience to back up his opinion, he warns us of the danger of generating and profiling music psychotherapy as „the“ German music therapy. And this is true. We have colleagues here who certainly do not define their own counter-transference as the „instrument of their trade“ or even the non plus ultra of the relationship with their patients - and still provide good companionship for sick people.

What importance do you attach to the papers, lectures and working groups, particularly with respect to the different schools of music therapy? Surely it is here a question of the broad spectrum of methods and, I could say, „ideologisms“.

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Of course there will be no workshop, no seminar, no paper, no plenary session, no concert or supporting programme in 1996, and no chat - however informal - over a beer or coffee that isn't enlivened by the characters of those involved! So a world congress, indeed any international meeting, is bound to be a meeting place for even more greatly differing ideologies than we already have and experience - especially in Germany. Although I only understand ideologies and their inherent ideologisms as an expression of our human characters.



Numerous weightings will be attached to the various events As hosts, we need first of all to weigh up our (already broad-based) offering to our guests. And when I say „hosts“, I naturally include the colleagues from Austria and Switzerland without whom it would be impossible to define music therapy in German-speaking countries; for the this reason they have been officially included in the National Committee for this Congress.

Then we need to weigh up the relative significance of the host and guest contributions - a task that could never be accomplished by a National Committee alone (and especially not by a German one with its staggering international experience - sorry, I'm succumbing to self-irony). That is why an Academic Commission of the World Federation will collect, coordinate and weigh up these international contributions in a manner which aims to make the widely varying directions other countries are travelling in visible or rather audible, and in any case understandable.

Tony Wigram (of London and Aalborg) took on this task for the VIIth Congress in Spain. With the support of the Presiding Committee I have been able to win Henk Smeijsters (from Holland) for 1996 - and I'm happy about that.

As far as our host contribution in the German-language field is concerned, it will certainly be a case of emphasizing the music psychotherapy that has developed here - including the constructively worrying remarks by Christoph Schwabe and others. Besides, as hosts, we can ensure there is a balanced emphasis on events from the practical, teaching and research fields - something I feel to be very important. And particularly research, which some of our Eastern European guests are very curious about. This balanced mixture of practice, teaching and research is something we can only recommend, request and hope for among the international contributions, too, because I can see greatly differing accentuations in the various countries. In this kind of overview Cheryl Manato's oft-mentioned book is providing us with excellent help - after we had first not taken any notice of it.

At special meetings we will then weigh up the international and national offerings. Of course, we won't be able to accept every contribution because of the need to create a clearly arranged overall programme. We are striving for an integrative concept and not an additive or even compilative one.

If all goes well, we will „just about“ be able to achieve such nice structural goals - but certainly all of them. Simply because every congress gets far too many totally uncategorizable offers, though I've nothing against a certain degree of unpredictable exoticism in the midst of such scientifically proven soundness. After all, a bit of circus should be part of any circle.

By the time the second, and final, preparatory meeting of the German National Committee takes place in May 1995, we should have

virtual clarity about the international contributions - and ours, too. Then we go into the „fine-tuning“ process - though this will certainly not involve any balancing out of different weights (e.g. the same proportions of music psychotherapy and music in medicine, for example). On the contrary, we will try to integrate the contributions into a basic structure that was decided on at the constituent meeting of our Committee in Hamburg in April and will be fine-tuned in 1995.

You, Prof. Decker-Voigt, Franz Mecklenbeck of the DGMT and Till Mengedoht of the DBVMT have already given some thought to ideas and guidelines vis-à-vis the structure and contents of the VIIIth World Congress in July 1996. At the end of April this year the German National Committee met for its first session. Recently you presented the results of this meeting to the International Committee. Can you now outline the initial plans? How will the five days be structured?


Before I answer your question, I should like to say that only since we have had this „triumvirate“ and the National Committee (and to my great delight nobody refused my invitations to join) have I had a positive feeling about the approach of this Congress. Up to then I felt very alone, which in itself is a natural result of the way in which international bodies are formed - the people appointed to them do not enjoy a grass-roots democratic mandate but often join them as a result of jobs assigned by an institution (CCH) or a government (as in my case) or because of somebody's personal initiative.

The initial plans which emerged from the German Committee's meeting are as follows (though listed here with no specific priority as that would prejudice the plans and decisions currently being discussed by the bodies mentioned):

The four congress days will feature, among others, the following emphases with German-language and international contributions:

- the inter-relationship between music therapy(ies) and their respective socio-cultural background
- research and effect in music therapy („research in music therapy/music therapy in research“)

We are planning to devote the third and fourth days to practical themes which we can only bunch together once the first contributions have come in. But we could focus on the following: institution-related areas of work (from private outpatient clinics to large-scale hospitals) or



clientele from a development-psychological viewpoint (prenatal music therapy right through to accompanying the dying).

Every day is to be opened by a „chairperson of the day“ with some introductory thoughts about the day and its themes. Personalities from the German-speaking and international music-therapy scene to whom music therapy has much to be grateful for have been invited to take the chair for a day. I can already mention Gertrud Katja Loos and Johannes Th. Eschen from Germany and Stella Mayr from Austria as the German-speaking personalities who have made music-therapy history and already said they would be willing to take the chair for a day.

The other days will be started off by international guests.

In the International Committee we are also collecting themes such as supervision in music therapy or inter-disciplinary music therapy - long since obligatory ones at other conventions or congresses. In addition, there were also some, to me, new and very attractive ideas such as workshops with manufacturers of instruments specially suited to therapy, offers devoted to the common and distinguishing features of music therapy and esoterics, music therapy and the mass media, etc.

In my attempt to name the possible themes for this Congress, I have noticed that the results of our first Committee meeting shouldn't be published in definite terms or „headlines/titles“ - not before the editing committee for the second preliminary brochure has seen them ...

What highlights are in prospect?

... We shouldn't mention any „stars“ before they have definitely said they'll be coming. The same applies to the patronage of our Congress.

„Stars“ are important as illuminating aspects - but the atmosphere of a congress is determined by the grass roots, not the top names.

That's all I can say about the results of our April session. After the Committee had met, there were quite a few letters from its members with additional ideas, in-depth suggestions about the themes mentioned and initial correspondence with guest stars and keynote speakers we'd like to have. But it would be foolish to mention any names before negotiations have been completed and contracts signed. But it's an exciting business and we will certainly inform the world of music therapy and the general public at the latest after the meetings in May 1995. Up to then there'll be lots of planning, ideas thrown own, substitutes found and surprises experienced - all in the context of our structural goal of sensibly integrating as many insights as possible into practice, research and teaching - or at least respecting their non-integrability.

What differences do you see from the Congress in Vittoria in 1993?

For the above-mentioned reasons I don't want to specify any clear differences from the contents of previous World Congress. But some may be surprised that in Hamburg the aim is to offer, in all, some 80 - 100 events whereas in Vittoria, if I remember correctly (without my notes), there were more than double that number. We hope that this change will result in a stronger focus on nationally and internationally interesting themes, thus counteracting the genuine danger of „unmanageability“, i.e. an inability to grasp what is going on.