

Further information on Anthroposophic Music and Singing Therapy

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History of Anthroposophic Music Therapy

Already in the Old Testament we find David, who with his string playing calmed and finally healed King Saul, who was plagued by an evil spirit. In ancient Greece it was known that music could help to restore the mental and spiritual inner harmony of a sick person. (Beat Böhm, *Heilende Musik im griechischen Altertum*, Thieme Verlag, 1958) In addition, the Greeks used the keys to achieve moral and medical effects (see Kolisko).

Plato and Aristotle describe not only the healing power of music, but also its pedagogical effectiveness as a means of educating people. From the post-Christian period it is said that music (auditions) was successfully used against depression and insanity. Arab scholars also report about the healing effect of music in the 9th century and in the 13th century musicians were employed in the hospital of Cairo to comfort the sleepless patients at night. In the 15th/16th century (Renaissance), active singing and lyre playing is mentioned for the first time in melancholic patients and the recommendation is made to use music as a remedy against the plague and other epidemics. In the Romantic period the medical reference system of music changed to a psychologically oriented one. In the 18th century, Seguin (cf. Beilharz In: Beilharz (eds.)) described the stimulating effect on people with so-called mental handicaps and Heller (see *ibid.*) spoke about the "uplifting" effect of music at the beginning of the 20th century. Anthroposophical music therapy does not go back to a founding personality, but should rather be seen in the context of the development of the anthroposophical movement and the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. In his writings, mainly in the lectures given in 1924 on speech formation, painting, pedagogy and religious questions, on Tone-Eurythmy (GA 278) and Music (GA 283), there is a wide variety of information on a deeper experience of sound, on intervals, on musical elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm and beat, on major and minor, on the development of music in the cultural epochs, as well as musical suggestions for use in a pedagogical context. The beginnings of anthroposophical music therapy are closely linked to the development of the curative education movement. From the very beginning of anthroposophical curative education music has had a high status. It was used not only in lessons with children and young people but also in the rhythmic organisation of the course of the day, week and year to create a harmonising environment for those in care (cf. Beilharz on <https://www.anthromedia.net>).

In the first curative homes Pilgramshain in Silesia (Germany, today Poland), and Sonnenhof in Arlesheim near Basel (Switzerland), music therapy was already being practiced in the 1920s. Karl König (1902 - 1966), who after completing his medical studies in 1927 worked for a year at the Ita Wegmans Clinical Therapeutic Institute in Arlesheim and in 1928 went to Pilgramshain as a senior physician, before founding the Camphill Movement in Scotland in 1939, became interested in the therapeutic effects of music at a very early stage and developed group therapies involving coloured light and eurythmy, for example. There were also isolated individual pieces of music, e.g. to help epileptic children to start the day with wake-up music without attacks. Until the first lyre was created by Edmund Pracht in 1926, classical instruments such as piano, violin, cello, percussion instruments or flutes were still used in the Clinical Therapeutic Institute in Arlesheim, which was directed by Ita Wegman. As Pracht felt that the piano was not harmonious for the children to accompany eurythmy, he developed the lyre, which from then on was also used in playing for adults. Edmund Pracht, who was a musician, recreated the lyre in collaboration with Lothar Gärtner, who as a young sculptor was active in the area surrounding the

Goetheanum. It was not a reproduction or further development of the ancient instruments lyre or kithara, but was created from new ideas of form and sound, in an effort to capture the elements of sound. Prachts intention was not primarily therapeutic, but rather a general musical one (cf. *ibid.*) While in the 1930s and 1940s it was above all the musical-therapeutic cultural impulse that was consolidated and further developed, the 1950s saw a further elaboration of the music-therapeutic approaches of the early period (cf. anthromedia.net). When Dr. König went to South Africa from Scotland, he placed further research into the effects of music in the hands of Dr. HansHeinrich Engel, whose musical anthropology forms the basis of music-therapeutic training in Switzerland.

From 1963 onwards, the music-therapeutic work initiated by Dr. König experienced a new revival through the collaboration with Dr. Engel and the musicologist Prof. Dr. Hermann Pfrogner. He and his collaborators developed group therapies for children with certain curative pedagogical clinical pictures. Eurythmic elements or coloured light were included. In addition, a circle of people who were doing research in music therapy was formed. The international study group founded by these three personalities, which included not only Johanna Spalinger and Maria Schüppel but also doctors, curative educators and musicians, existed for only a few years, but has had a strong influence on anthroposophical music therapy up to the present day. They researched the effect of the musical elements so that they could be used as "active ingredients" in a well-dosed manner, as in the case of drug treatment. Since the 1950s, Julius Knierim developed a different kind of music therapy activity as a teacher and musician, in which he wanted to strengthen the personality strengthening and soulordering powers of artistic activity and, in the sense of salutogenesis, to have a healing effect not least through improvisation. Knierim also gave decisive impulses for a further development of the playing approach on the lyre by giving the lyre a new meaning as an "instrument of the middle" by forming a tone between the right and left hand. (Beilharz In: Beilharz (Eds.)) Through Norbert Visser in the 1980s, the impulse of the Choroï musical instrument making led to the development of new, easily playable instruments which can be used both in joint improvisational playing and in therapy. These instruments are produced exclusively in social-therapeutic workshops where people with so-called disabilities work (see Beilharz In: Beilharz (eds.)). Short biographies of the music-therapeutic pioneers can be found on the website www.musik-therapie-anthroposophisch.de (German).

So the initial impetus for anthroposophical music therapy lies in curative education and was inspired and decisively developed by the doctors Dr Karl König and Dr Hans-Heinrich Engel. Both of these personalities used music as a medicine that can unfold its effectiveness right into the organic realm. It seems that music, religion and the art of healing, which in ancient times were closely connected and went their separate ways over the centuries, are now growing together again through anthroposophical music therapy work. The Music Therapeutic Workplace of Maria Schüppel was founded in Berlin (Germany) in 1963 as a training centre and was thus the very first anthroposophical music therapeutic training. In 1970, out of the Choroï impulse, Julius Knierim, Johanna Spalinger and others founded the Free School of Music at Michaelshof in Hepsisau (near Stuttgart in Germany) as a travelling study. The training as an anthroposophical music therapist, which has been offered since 1983 at the Academie De Wervel founded by Eva Mees in Driebergen (Netherlands), has been offered since 2006 at the Hogeschool Leiden as a training course in art therapy. In 1997 the Orpheus School for Music Therapy was founded in Bern (Switzerland). The founding members were Johanna Spalinger, Dr. Heinrich Schneider and

Marlise Maurer. This was followed in 2001 by the Dorian School of Music Therapy, founded by Christof-Andreas Lindenberg in Glenmoore, PA, USA.

Currently (2025), Anthroposophic Music Therapy can be studied at the following educational institutions:

- Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences, Institut für Kunsttherapie, Germany
- Hogeschool Leiden, University of Applied Sciences, Bachelor of Musictherapy, Holland
- Stella Maris Bologna, formazione Helios Musicoterapia, Italy
- Further training for qualified music therapists: a t k a Orpheus Studiengang Orpheus Musiktherapie, Switzerland

Training and further training courses recognised by the Medical Section can be found at:
<https://medsektion.goetheanum.ch/ikam-arts/iarte>

The therapeutic elements in their effectiveness

In addition to the usual tuning of 440 Hertz, anthroposophical music therapy uses the lower tuning of 432 Hertz. This lower tuning also has ethereal effects.

Each individual tone can have an effect through its relationship to the Sevenfold or Twelffold nature of the cosmos.

- Thus the seven planetary qualities become effective in the tones of the octave and can support organ processes.
- The Twelfth is depicted and experienced in its relationship to the sensory processes, so that one can, for example, choose a tone as a "sensory gate" to address a sensory function, e.g. the sense of thought, and then from there address the respective life processes (see below) with intervals.

By carefully selecting the respective pitch at which we play music with the patient, we reach the different parts of the being.

On the one hand, the intervals represent the relationship of the human being to the world around him, on the other hand, they can be used on different levels due to their manifold relationships to the etheric aspects of the human being. For example, a person can feel secure when I surround him with the fifth, while he can feel his body limit in the fourth or enter his inner soul space when the third sounds. In the seventh he can experience an out-of-self, while in the octave he can experience the inner power of uprightness.

- The effectiveness of the etheric in the form of life processes, inner life movements and life stages is also expressed in intervals and can be stimulated by them.

The various scales - the pentatonic, hexatonic and mirror scales, the modes, the cadenza, major and minor - are based on the connection of the seven planetary tones with the twelve tones of the zodiac. Each of them has a completely different therapeutic effect, because they each address something different in the human being. The fresh, uplifting, health-radiating character can be experienced very clearly in a thirteenth mood, whereas in a minor mood it will rather be the introverted, sensitive, slowed down, suffering character.

The rhythms can have an invigorating or calming, harmonizing or strengthening effect. The dactylos (- v v), for example, has a calming, thought-fixing effect due to its falling character and is more balanced in contrast to the trochee (- v), while the anapaest (v v v -) fixes the feeling due to its invigorating character and is not as strongly arousing as the iamb (v -).

In active music therapy, the instruments are always easy to play and yet full of sound. The instruments are usually little known, as many instruments have been newly developed in connection with the anthroposophical musical impulse. The planetary metals are also included as a therapeutic quality. The individual instruments will be presented at the end of this chapter. They can be divided into three groups. In the same way that in the human being as a tripartite being nerve-sense system, rhythmic system and metabolic limb system work as separate

systems into one another, the various instruments can also be assigned to these three areas in their healing effectiveness:

- The wind instruments correspond to the head area of the human being.
- The stringed and plucked instruments correspond to the middle person and work in the rhythmic system.
- The percussion instruments work in the metabolic area of the lower person. There are instruments with a "warm", dull sound that have an "enveloping" effect and others with a bright, clear sound that have a structuring effect.

There are warming (in case of illness it is the inflammation) or structuring (in case of illness it is the hardening) instruments in every group of instruments.

For example, if I address the head pole in the "upper" person, I can have a storming, invigorating and ordering effect on thoughts if I use the wind instruments. If I select instruments with a "warm" tone, such as the chamois horn, this can also have an effect on "cold" head diseases. If I want to reduce inflammatory tendencies in the head area, I choose a wind instrument with a clear, bright tone, such as a silver or soprano flute.

If I turn to the "lower" person, I can stimulate or calm his metabolism. The digestive powers are supported by the use of deep, "warm" sounding instruments such as the tenorhorn or the Indian drum. Carillons also work in this area. The therapeutic elements in their effectiveness. Allergy-related intolerances can also be compensated by specifically addressing the metabolic area. The instruments which stimulate the powers of the middle man and harmonize him in the rhythmic system consist mainly of the lyre and the string instruments related to it, but all vibrating instruments such as gongs, hand bells and tubular bells also belong to it. It is precisely the strengthening of the rhythmic organisation of the human being that can compensate for health-related one-sidedness, so that neither the head forces intervene too deeply nor the forces of the metabolic person "bounce up". The drone lyre is able to bring together the top and bottom of the human being in a wonderful way - so that they can interlock again.

Singing occupies a special position, because the active participation of the human being alone has a healthy effect in all three areas. Targeted exercises strengthen the intended effect.

About Singing Therapy

Often the voice range of the patient is very limited at the beginning of a singing therapy. This makes it all the more joyful to be amazed at how the tone and beauty of their own voice develops.

Many patients have never sung before and think that if they are prescribed singing therapy, they cannot sing and are unmusical. They also have no musical knowledge (reading music etc.). If they do get involved, however, they quickly realize that they should not sing songs or even arias, but that they are gently guided by trained singing therapists to create simple sounds and melodies.

Step by step they work out the elements of singing, healthy breathing, the sound element, as well as sound and tone formation, according to the diagnosis and their current condition.

These elements of singing and the regularities of music can be grasped by anthroposophy as archetypal forces that constitute the human being physically, mentally and spiritually.

The connections between these effects were researched by the Swedish singer Valborg Werbeck-Svärdström (1879 - 1972) in collaboration with Rudolf Steiner and worked out as a singing therapy, finally presented for the first time in her book 'The School of Voice Revealment'.

- In their own practice, attentive listening opens up a way for the patient to strengthen their individuality and to deepen their self-perception.
- Through sung vowels, the mental perception experiences differentiation, inner deepening and also expression.
- In the formation of consonants, forces are stimulated which are plastically effective in the shaping of the human organism.
- As the sound vibrates through the human form, dammed and blocked energies can be made to flow again and a stimulation of the life organism and the self-healing powers is created.
- In this way, the breathing movement, which is the basis of all sound and tone formation, is revived, which in turn has a harmonising effect on the whole person.

Singing therapy is therefore a therapeutic method that addresses, strengthens and harmonises all levels of the human being.

Learn more (German):

▷ [Gesangtherapie nach der Schule der Stimmenthüllung](#)