

Poland

Krzysztof Stachyra, Ph.D.

President of the Polish Association for
Therapy Through the Arts
Lublin, Poland

Snapshot

Area

322,575 square kilometers

Population

38,500,000

Official Language

Polish

Ethnic Groups

Polish are the main group (97%)

Median Age

37.3 years

Children under 5

1,930,000 (2009 estimate)

Source

Demographic Yearbook of Poland
2010

pl.wikipedia.org



"You are the music while the music lasts."

- T. S. Eliot

Demographics

It is difficult to state how many music therapists work in Poland because there are no official statistics. In recent decades a few hundred music therapists have graduated from various programs, but many of these graduates now work in other fields or simply have not been able to find employment as a music therapist.

Background Information

Polish music therapy has a tradition of over 40 years, with the first music therapy university program being established in 1973. Five universities now offer music therapy programs at the undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate level. The most popular means of studying music therapy are postgraduate programs along with various trainings and workshops.

In Poland, music therapists belong to three main associations: 1) the Polish Association of Music Therapists, 2) the Polish Association for Therapy through the Arts, or 3) the Arts Therapists' Association "Kajros." The second of these organizations publishes the journal *Therapy Through the Arts* and is the administrator of the Internet portal promoting various forms of therapy through the arts (see

www.arteterapia.pl).

Unfortunately, there is still no official recognition from the government or legal protection for music therapy practitioners in Poland. The term "music therapist" is not featured on the list of registered occupations. Consequently, a wide range of music education activities are described as "music therapy" even though they may be administered by individuals without a music therapy background.

At present, most music therapists work in hospitals, sanatoriums, nursing homes, occupational therapy centers for people with intellectual disabilities, psychiatric patients, or educational centers. The range of settings in which music therapy is used has grown over the years. In the early days, it was used mostly with psychiatric patients, probably because psychiatric hospitals were the institutions most interested in art as a therapy. The last decade has seen a growing interest in early childhood music therapy. More and more music therapists are working with children. As mentioned above, because of the lack of regulation there are many situations in which "music therapy" is carried out by people who have not undergone the appropriate training. Consequently, the kind of work they do often has more in common with music education than with music therapy.

Common Approaches

During the development of music therapy in Poland, two methods were created. One is the "Musical Portrait," by E. Galińska, intended for people with psychiatric problems. The second and most well-known is Mobile Music Recreation Model (MMR) by Maciej Kierył. This is a very simple and accessible tool for working with children. MMR sessions are comprised of several stages: Activation (i.e., warm-up), release, rhythmization, sensitivity, relaxation, and gentle activation. Each stage is flexible in time and content depending on the participants' needs and the ideas of the therapist or leader. Various people can carry out this music prophylaxis and therapy method after undergoing several hours of training. For this reason, many preschool teachers and people working with children use this method in their practice.

In Poland there is no opportunity to study any specific music therapy method for children and their families (except the Polish methods), so music therapists tend to use an eclectic approach, bringing together elements of different methods and philosophies. They also use elements of Carl Orff's music education system, developing movement by W. Sherborne, the Good Start Method, and the Dennison method.

The earliest form of music intervention leading to health promotion and treatment is conducted in the Infants' Pathology Department of the Children's Hospital in Lublin. The patients are premature babies and infants with health issues. The unit has a special integrated sound system in every room. Relaxing music is played during feeding times to enhance the infant's sucking reflex. Some parents decide to continue playing relaxation music at home.

People in Poland are becoming more and more interested in music therapy: Elements of music therapy can be encountered in a wide range of settings, even in cultural centers. Music therapy classes take place in inclusive preschool settings and in centers for children with special needs. There are a few private

centers specializing in therapeutic and development classes for children.

Movement challenges, brain damage, autism spectrum disorders, emotional disturbances, and speech/language issue are the most common reasons for participation in classes for children under 5. Music therapy sessions are usually part of a complex treatment led by a therapeutic team. Music therapy interventions are usually provided within individual sessions, and occasionally in group sessions if there are children with similar therapeutic goals. Music therapy sessions usually take 30-45 minutes. Parents often join the sessions, participating in their child's therapy and learning how to implement specific musical activities in the home environment.

Prominent Publications

- Natanson T. (1979). *Wstęp do nauki o muzykoterapii [Introduction to the science of music therapy]*. Ossolineum, Wrocław, Polska.
- Nordoff P., & Robbins C. (2008). *Terapia muzyką w pracy z dziećmi niepełnosprawnymi [Therapy in Music for Handicapped Children]*. Impuls. Kraków: Polska.

About the Author



Krzysztof Stachyra, Ph.D. is a music therapist and music educator. He works in the Art Therapy Center with a wide variety of clients and teaches at the Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Dr. Stachyra is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Therapy Through the Arts* and serves as the President of the Polish Association for Therapy Through the Arts.

Contact: kris.stachyra@gmail.com