



MUSIC THERAPY
Te Poutama Hononga
Weaving Connections

**Te Rōpū Puoro Whakaora O Aotearoa |
Music Therapy New Zealand
CONFERENCE 2026**

Grafton Campus, Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland

12 - 13 September | 12 - 13 Mahuru 2026

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WELCOME



MUSIC THERAPY
Te Poutama Hononga
Weaving Connections

Welcome to the Te Rōpū Puoro Whakaoro O Aotearoa | Music Therapy New Zealand Conference 2026

The Conference theme, **Te Poutama Hononga: Weaving Connections**, celebrates the art of weaving together people, stories, and music, creating patterns of understanding, and community. The te reo Māori name, gifted by Matua Sonny Niha (Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland - Te Huinga Hinengaro | Centre for Brain Research) means “the connected journey of achievement and progress”. Each thread represents a unique experience or voice, and through the process of weaving diverse strands, new relationships and meanings emerge. Logo design is by Mark Roach.

We hope you enjoy the presentations, and the opportunity to connect and network with the music therapy community from across the motu.

Te Rōpū Puoro Whakaoro O Aotearoa | Music Therapy New Zealand thanks our Conference Convenor Dr Alison Talmage, and the Conference Committee: Kathryn Stevenson, Rachel Foxell, Irene van Schalkwyk, Leesa Tilley and Rachel Farrell.

Thank you also to the Conference Selection Committee: Dr Alison Talmage, Irene van Schalkwyk, Assoc. Prof. Sarah Hoskyns, Kimberley Wade, May Bee Choo Clulee, and Rachel Foxell.

The assistance of the Auckland Regional MThNZ group is greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to Raukauri Music Therapy Centre for hosting the Conference Welcome Event, to our sponsors, and to the CeleBRation Choir who will perform at morning tea on Saturday 12 September.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome event

The welcome event will begin at 6:30pm on Friday 11 September, at Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre, 5 Carlton Gore Road, Grafton.

Venue

The conference will be held at Grafton Campus, University of Auckland, 85 Park Road, Grafton.

The registration desk will be in the Atrium - the reception area of the building.

Plenary sessions will be held in room 501-110 on the first floor (take the stairs or elevator from the Atrium area of the building, and follow the signs). Parallel sessions will be held in rooms 503-020 and 503-028 which are on the ground floor (signposted from the Atrium).

All teas and lunches will be held in the Atrium. Poster displays will also be in this area.

Please ensure that you move between sessions quickly to avoid disturbing presenters.

A venue map is provided overleaf.

Accommodation, transport and parking

Information about accommodation and transport is provided on the website:

<https://www.musictherapy.org.nz/whats-happening/music-therapy-new-zealand-conference-2026/>. There is parking available at Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre, 5 Carlton Gore Road, Grafton, and on the surrounding roads.

Mihi Whakatau arrangements

The conference will begin at 8:30am on Saturday, 12 September, with a mihi whakatau. Please ensure you are in your seats for the start.

Dinner

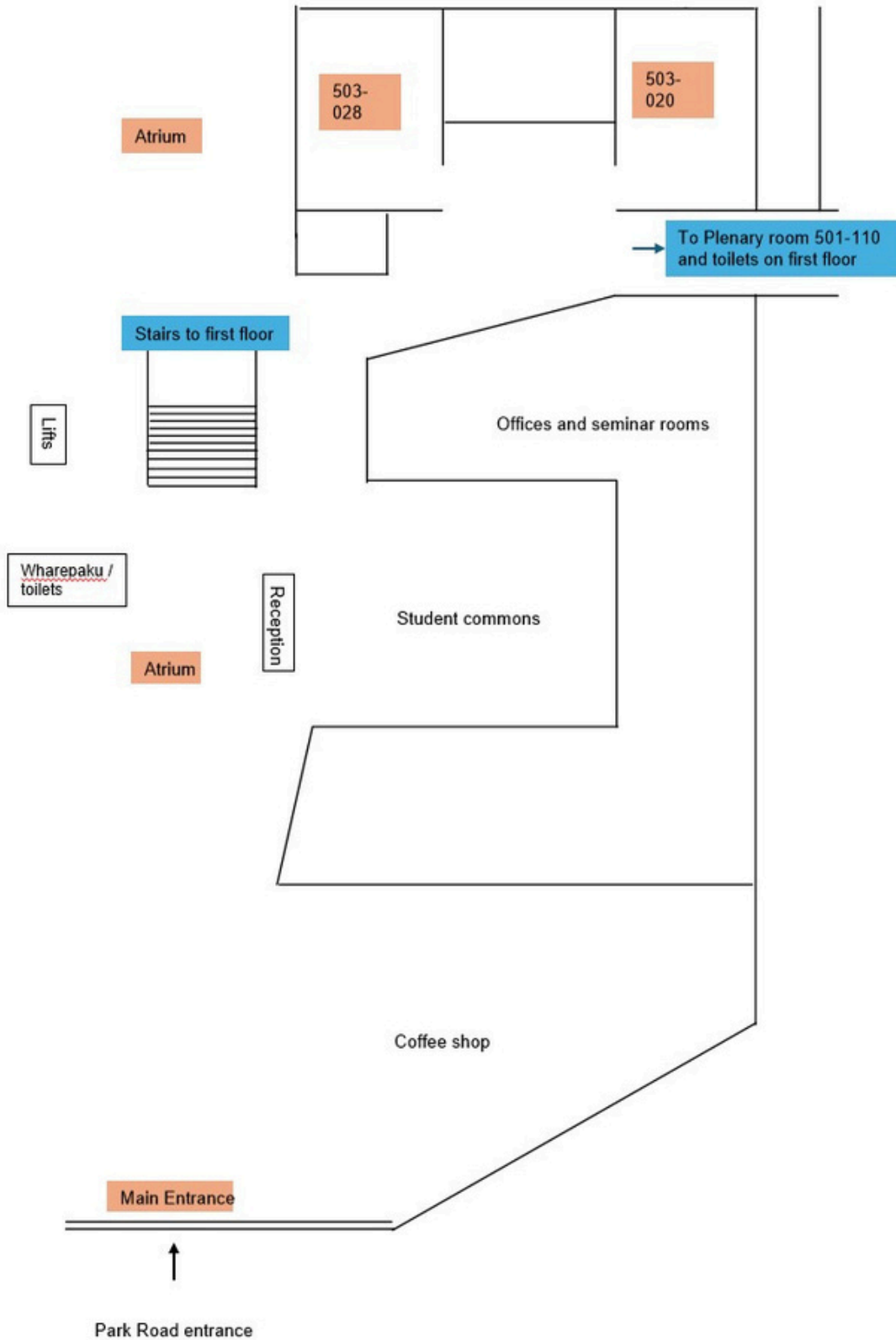
The Conference dinner will be held at Something and Social, Newmarket. Bookings have been taken for this event - the booking reserves your place for the dinner. Dinner costs are for the individual and are not included in the conference registration fee.

If you wish to change your dinner booking (either to join the group, or to cancel, please let the registration desk know before the end of lunch on Saturday. MThNZ will be charged for unfilled bookings.

Please keep mobile phones on silent throughout the proceedings.

VENUE MAP

Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland
Grafton Campus



PROGRAMME

Evening Welcome Reception

Rāmere Friday 11 September	
Welcome Reception to be held at Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre (5 Carlton Gore Road, Grafton)	
6:30pm	Registration, meet and greet
6:45pm	Mihi whakatau Welcome Speakers: Raukatauri Music Therapy Trust representative, Stephen Guerin (MThNZ Chair), Dr Alison Talmage (Conference Convenor)
7:00pm	Networking (drinks and canapes)
8:00pm	Close of evening

PROGRAMME

Rāhoroi Saturday 12 September Ata Morning programme		
8:00am	Registration: Grafton Campus Building, Atrium	
8:30am	Mihi Whakatau - Plenary Room 501-110	
8:45am	Welcome: Stephen Guerin (MThNZ Chair), Linda Webb MNZM (MThNZ President) and Dr Alison Talmage (Conference Convenor)	
9:00am	SESSION 1: Keynote Presentation 1: Mauri Tui Tuia - Creative Therapies in Collaboration: Katie Pureti and Jan McConnell - Plenary Room 501-110	
10:00am	Morning tea	
10:45am	<p>SESSION 2 - Room 503-020</p> <p>2.1 Songs that bind: the role of music therapy in strengthening family identity during prolonged early infant hospitalisation: Maybelle Swaney</p> <p>2.2 Exploring mechanisms within musical experiences through the lens of “flow”: Jenny Lee</p>	<p>SESSION 3 - Room 503-028</p> <p>3.1 Workshop: Navigating the Woven Self: A Malaga Through 'Le Vā': June Potifara</p>
	11:45	5-minute break
11:50am	<p>SESSION 4 - Room 503-020</p> <p>4.1 Running music therapy groups in a forensic mental health setting: JP Young</p> <p>4.2 Multiple Relationships within a small professional community: Navigating intersections in the supervisory relationship: Penny Warren</p>	<p>SESSION 5 - Room 503-028</p> <p>5.1 Culture in/and/as music therapy: Amodini Jayawardena</p> <p>5.2 Whakarongo, Tū Mana, Te Wā: Embracing te Ao Māori and weaving the Clinical-Cultural Pathway into an established music therapy service: Rachel Foxell and Jessica Gerbic</p>
	12:55pm	Lunch

PROGRAMME

Rāhoroi Saturday 12 September Ahiahi Afternoon programme		
	SESSION 6 - Room 503-020	SESSION 7 - Room 503-028
2:00pm	6.1 Finding a new tempo: Rethinking safety in music therapy through lived experience: Helen Dowthwaite	7.1 Panel: The Weaving of Brown Threads: TJ Hernandez, June Potifara, Amodini Jayawardena
	6.2 Creating Cohesive Cultures: He waka eke noa 'We are all in the waka together: Rani Allan	
3:00pm	Afternoon tea Poster presentations at 3:15pm	
	SESSION 8 - Room 503-020	SESSION 9 - Room 503-028
3:30pm	8.1 Master of Creative Arts Therapies: Weaving together arts therapy modalities and interdisciplinary expertise in postgraduate professional education: Rebecca Weber, Alison Talmage, Naomi Pears-Scown, Jung-Hsu Wan	9.1 Young and Becoming: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Youngism and Professional Identity in Music Therapy: Zoe Ioannou
4:00pm	SESSION 10 - Plenary Room 501-110 MUSICKING: All you need is Love Me Do: Medleys in Music Therapy: JP Young	
4:30pm	REFLECTIONS ON THE DAY - Plenary Room 501-110	
4:45pm	Close of Day 1	
6:30pm	CONFERENCE DINNER Something & Social, 309 Broadway, Newmarket	

PROGRAMME

Rātapu Sunday 13 September	
8:15am	Registration for one-day attendees, Grafton Campus Building, Atrium
8:30am	SESSION 11 - Plenary Room 501-110 MUSICKING: Spoons: The People's Instrument: Chris O'Connor
9:00am	MThNZ AGM - Plenary Room 501-110
10:30am	Morning tea
11:00am	SESSION 12 - Plenary Room 501-110 Keynote Presentation 2: Taonga Ihi Orooro - Māori Sacred Sound Healing: Dr Waireti Roestenburg
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	SESSION 13 - Plenary Room 501-110 Taonga Ihi Orooro - Māori Sacred Sound Healing Workshop - Dr Waireti Roestenburg
3:00pm	Afternoon tea
3:20pm	SESSION 14 - Plenary Room 501-110 Plenary session: Te Poutama Hononga Weaving Connections.
3:50pm	Closing remarks and acknowledgements
4:00pm	Close

SESSION 1: Keynote presentation



Jan McConnell, MAAT, DTAA (Prof), ANZACATA, PNZ
Katie Pureti, NZ RMTh, MMusTher, BMus, ATCL
Mauri Tui Tuia – Creative Arts Therapies, Aotearoa New Zealand

Presentation Title: **Mauri Tui Tuia: Creative Therapies in Collaboration**

Mauri Tui Tuia is a creative therapies organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand, seeded in Te Tai Tokerau and Tāmaki Makaurau, delivering trauma-informed, culturally-resonant music, dance movement, and arts therapies across schools, early childhood centres, and community and iwi organisations. Building resilience and creative resources through community collaboration sits at the heart of our mahi, alongside a commitment to equitable, inclusive access to therapy support for tamariki, whānau, schools, and communities.

This keynote speaks to music therapists as allied health professionals working in education and community contexts, asking what becomes possible when music therapy is positioned within a collective model of practice. As one of the few organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand to formally umbrella music therapy, dance movement therapy, and arts therapy within a single service model, we have seen the strengths of advocating collectively while enhancing each professional creative therapy strand as distinct yet relational. Underpinning our professional differences is a shared kaupapa of creative trauma-informed care, cultural responsiveness, community partnership, and equity of access for whānau.

The organisation's development has stayed in resonance with the communities it serves. Creative therapies are embedded within everyday environments - ECE, schools, and community spaces - reducing barriers to access while supporting inclusive practice, emotional co-regulation as a resource, and relational safety as a foundation for learning. Programmes are shaped in co-creation with kaiako, whānau, iwi and community organisations and government ministries, linking local, place-based work with broader regional and national wellbeing initiatives.

Alongside reflections on governance, workforce sustainability, lived experience, and neuro-affirming business practices, the keynote will include brief participatory moments using sound, rhythm, and movement inquiry. These experiences invite music therapists to embody how interdisciplinary collaboration can be woven without losing professional identity, and to consider collaboration not as an adjunct to clinical work, but as a core therapeutic and advocacy mechanism in Aotearoa.

Jan McConnell

Jan McConnell is a registered dance movement therapist, arts therapist, and physiotherapist, and a founding director of Mauri Tui Tuia. Her work centres on trauma-informed, neuro-affirming, and culturally-responsive practice with tamariki, whānau, and communities across Aotearoa. Jan has extensive experience working in early childhood, school, and community settings, with a particular focus on embodied co-regulation, relational safety, and interdisciplinary collaboration. She is passionate about developing sustainable practice models that support both clinical integrity and embodied understanding of neuro-differences across the human landscape. She advocates for the creative arts therapies as an essential component of equitable and accessible mental health systems. Jan regularly presents and contributes to professional learning spaces nationally and internationally, and her leadership is grounded in her lived experience of neurodivergence and bicultural being, underpinned by a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Katie Pureti

Katie Pureti is a registered music therapist and senior facilitator with Mauri Tui Tuia, based in Tai Tokerau. Her clinical work is grounded in relational, trauma-informed music therapy practice, supporting children and whānau experiencing neurodiversity, grief, and complex trauma. Katie brings a strong commitment to bicultural practice and community-embedded service delivery, working closely with educators, families, and allied professionals to co-create meaningful therapeutic experiences. Within Mauri Tui Tuia, she plays a key role in interdisciplinary collaboration, supervision, and programme development, ensuring music therapy retains its depth and specificity while contributing to a wider creative therapy ecology. Katie values music as a medium for connection, regulation, and shared meaning-making, and is particularly interested in how sound-based practices can sit alongside movement and visual arts therapies without losing professional clarity.



SESSION 12: Keynote presentation and SESSION 13: Workshop



Dr Waireti Roestenburg (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa, Ngāti Pāhauwera, Rongomaiwahine, Ngāpuhi nui-tonu, Dutch, Irish, English), PhD Psychology
Open Polytechnic

Presentation title: **Taonga Ihi Orooro – Māori Sacred Sound Healing**

Our role and responsibility as Rā-Ngāti-Rā (humanity) is to allow the universe to speak into and through us. “Ihirangaranga” (ihi) are the source vibrations of the universe, and “orooro” means sound. Taonga Ihi Orooro is an integrative, sound related, wellbeing practice and developing body of knowing/knowledge that arises from the spirit, land and essence of Aotearoa New Zealand. It supports us to experience and come into alignment with the resonance of our life-giving vitalities. Healing, wellbeing and flourishing development are inevitable outcomes of regular expression and alignment with Taonga Ihi Orooro.

An experiential introduction to the timeless-ever-living practice and re-emerging knowing/knowledge body that is Taonga Ihi Orooro. You can begin to understand how to draw on and practice Taonga Ihi Orooro to facilitate healing and wellbeing for yourself and others.

Trans-formative Wānanga

Taonga Ihi Orooro imbued spaces simultaneously soothe the soul, comfort the mind, and give hearts ease to our personal-collective bodies. They provide conditions that allow us to rest, rejuvenate and remember the power, presence and movement of our natural vitalities and giftings. They awaken our unique essence, purpose, wisdom and power (mana āhua ake).

Wānanga deepen the introduction. In te ao Māori we understand that wairua is the source, mauri the course, and mana the natural outcomes of the vital flow of life. Within a tikanga-informed space, a tailored repertoire of Māori sacred source sound forms will be expressed by Waireti and participants to support us to enter and deepen our experience of ihirangaranga as our wairua-mauri-mana. Practicing Taonga Ihi Orooro brings us into deeper alignment with the flow of our wairua-mauri-mana. Personal/professional healing, wholeness and flourishing development are inevitable.

Dr Waireti Roestenburg

Dr Waireti (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa, Ngāti Pāhauwera, Rongomaiwahine, Ngāpuhi nui-tonu, Dutch, Irish, English; PhD Psychology), is a Māori Cycologist and wairua-centric practitioner of over 30 years. She is a Principal Academic, and Programme Lead of the Degree in Social Health and Wellbeing for the Open Polytechnic where she specialises in a Kaupapa Māori view of Māori and Indigenous mental wellness and illness.

Like many Indigenous pracademics Waireti's praxis approach is informed by a synergy of four healing/knowledge systems: enlivened whakapapa as revealed knowledge; decades of wairua-centric lived experience, training and practice; original teachings (tohunga/tohuna/elders); and obsidian-edged empirical scholarship and research (Indigenous and other), including post-doctoral. Her doctoral research identified four key transformational elements of an evident, yet subsequent to colonisation, no longer well-understood wave of unstoppable Māori/Indigenous re-vitalisation and development. If we align with these elements, personal-collective healing, wellbeing and flourishing development become inevitable.

Dr Waireti provides wānanga for whānau, hapu, iwi, communities and organisations. She researches, publishes, presents and performs at events and national / international conferences. She guest lectures to Psychologists (including Clinical), Psychiatric Registrars, Scientists, Music Therapists and others. As 'Te Amokura Healing, Wellbeing and Development', Waireti delivers a range of integrated, evidence-based, wairua-centric services, including 'Taonga Ihi Orooro – Māori Sacred Sound Healing Wānanga', 'Mauri-informed approaches to trauma, healing, living and learning', and 'Wairua Māori Re-vitalisation Programmes'. Her praxis supports us to remember and activate our power and wisdom.



PRESENTATION INDEX

(in Programme order)

Session	Title (hyperlinked to abstracts)	Presenter
2.1	Songs that bind: The role of music therapy in strengthening family identity during prolonged early infant hospitalisation	Maybelle Swaney
2.2	Exploring mechanisms within musical experiences through the lens of 'flow'	Jenny (Chi-Yun) Lee
3.1	Workshop: Navigating the Woven Self: A Malaga Through 'Le Vā'	June Potifara
4.1	Running music therapy groups in a forensic mental health setting	JP Young
4.2	Multiple Relationships Within a Small Professional Community: Navigating Intersections in the Supervisory Relationship	Penny Warren
5.1	Culture in/and/as Music Therapy	Amodini Jayawardena
5.2	Whakarongo, Tū Mana, Te Wā: Embracing te Ao Māori and weaving the Clinical-Cultural Pathway into an established Music Therapy Service	Rachel Foxell, Jessica Gerbic
6.1	Finding a New Tempo: Rethinking Safety in Music Therapy Through Lived Experience	Helen Dowthwaite
6.2	Creating Cohesive Cultures: He waka eke noa 'We are all in the waka together'	Rani Allan
7.1	Panel: The Weaving of Brown Threads	TJ Hernandez, June Potifara, Amodini Jayawardena
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9.1	Young and Becoming: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Youngism and Professional Identity in Music Therapy	Zoe Ioannou

MUSICKING AND POSTERS INDEX

Session	Title (hyperlinked to abstracts)	Presenter
Musicking		
10	All you need is Love Me Do: Medleys in Music Therapy	JP Young
11	SPOONS - The People's Instrument	Chris O'Connor
Posters		
Posters will be displayed in the Atrium. There will be 2-minute presentations of each at afternoon tea, 3:15pm on Saturday 12 September.		
From theory to clinical practice: Weaving music therapy into psychedelic-assisted therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.		Carlos Riegelhaupt Landreani
From Residents to Recording Artists: Using a Portable Studio in Aged Care Music Therapy		Luke Stothart
The VOCCAL Handbook: A Toolkit for Neurological Choirs		Alison Talmage, Suzanne Purdy, Te Oti Rakena, Daphne Rickson
The sound of presence: live vs recorded classical guitar across early childhood, aged care, and home settings		Nivisha Singh
Transition to School: The weaving of partnerships to create a unique school readiness program.		Samantha Schoeler-Jones
Performance		
The performance will be at morning tea, 10:00am on Saturday 12 September in the Atrium		
CeleBRation Choir		led by Jenny Gordon and Alison Talmage

ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Songs that bind: The role of music therapy in strengthening family identity during prolonged early infant hospitalisation

Maybelle Swaney

Session 2.1
Saturday 12 September
10:45am
Venue: 503-020

This presentation reflects on two case vignettes featuring the presenter's clinical music therapy work with infants and families in a paediatric hospital setting in Australia. In each of the therapeutic encounters, the family experienced a prolonged hospital admission for their baby, involving preterm birth and intensive care. Through the therapeutic process of engaging in music therapy, the mothers participated in exploring their personal connections with music, and using their voice in developing bonding experiences with their baby. The music therapist facilitated compositional experiences whereby parents created and recorded musical pieces using their voices in singing, reading and storytelling. In both cases, the fathers also played an important role in contributing their voices to the unique family story.

Maybelle Swaney completed her music therapy training at Anglia Ruskin University and has been practising in Australia as a Registered Music Therapist since 2012. Maybelle currently serves as the Music Therapy Clinical Lead at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, South Australia. Maybelle's clinical work draws on improvisational models of music therapy and composition methods.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Session 2.2
Saturday 12 September
11:15am
Venue: 503-020

Exploring mechanisms within musical experiences through the lens of 'flow'

Jenny (Chi-Yun) Lee

Music improvisation is widely used in music therapy practice; however, the mechanisms underlying therapeutic musical experiences are not always explicitly articulated. Drawing on literature from music improvisation research, neuroscience, and music therapy, this study explores how the concept of flow may provide an interpretive lens for identifying mechanisms at work. These perspectives form part of a broader doctoral study that examines interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks for understanding the workings of music improvisation and its clinical implications.

This presentation shares preliminary insights from an ongoing action research design, exploring how the Five Dimensions of Music Improvisation - derived from music improvisation pedagogy - may be translated into music therapy. Using neuroscience literature to provide a rationale for therapeutic moments, a case vignette will illustrate how this neuroscience-informed approach informs clinical insights. The presentation aims to stimulate dialogue about how conceptual and neuroscience-informed perspectives may contribute to deeper understanding of music therapy practice.

Jenny (Chi-Yun) Lee is a NZ Registered Music Therapist based in Christchurch, and a part-time PhD candidate at Victoria University of Wellington. Her research interests include music improvisation processes, neuroscience perspectives on musical experience and wellbeing, and reflective approaches for professional development. Her doctoral research explores how insights from improvisation research and neuroscience may contribute to developing deeper understanding of mechanisms within musical experiences in music therapy.

Alongside her research, she works clinically with Southern Music Therapy, with particular interest in trauma-informed and neuroscience-informed approaches to music therapy practice. She provides supervision for early-career music therapists. She has also been a guest-lecturer at the University of Canterbury, delivering workshops on improvisation.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Navigating the Woven Self: A Malaga Through 'Le Vā'

June Potifara

Session 3.1

Saturday 12 September

10:45am

Venue: 050-028

This workshop traces my malaga (journey) as a Sāmoan music therapist, from student to practitioner, navigating the weaving of Pasifika and Indigenous knowledge with Western-informed music therapy. Along this journey, I reflect on how Pasifika relational concepts and principles have shaped my therapeutic identity and practice.

Participants will be invited into experiential exercises involving pese (song), siva (dance/embodiment), and fa'agogo (traditional oral storytelling), where le vā (the sacred relational space) is enacted as an evolving thread of relationality, care, and connection. This workshop highlights approaches to music therapy that encourage cultural reflexivity, challenge oppressive systems, and support diverse pathways for growth, healing, and connection.

June Potifara is a Sāmoan NZ Registered Music Therapist based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa. Her practice is grounded in Pasifika and Indigenous knowledge, interwoven into Western-informed approaches.

June works with people across the lifespan, from children and rangatahi to adults and older adults in both mental health and disability contexts. She also facilitates Ma'au Music Therapy, her private practice. Committed to nurturing le vā' (the sacred relational space) and advocating for music therapy within her community, June works collaboratively with Pasifika organisations and support services to co-design music therapy programmes that respond to the unique needs of Pasifika communities.

Through culturally reflexive practice, she advocates for approaches that honour identity, challenge oppressive systems, and uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Her work centres relational ways of being and inclusive approaches grounded in collective and relational understandings of growth, connection, and healing.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Running music therapy groups in a forensic mental health setting

JP Young

Session 4.1
Saturday 12 September
11:50am
Venue: 503-020

This will be an exploration and celebration of the way a sense of community can persist within a long-term forensic mental health setting, and the role of music therapy in supporting this.

Many of the people I work with in this field have been marginalised by both their criminal offending and their mental illness. However, music therapy groups provide a space where clients can come together and support each other.

I will discuss this, as well as some of the challenges and successes I've encountered running these groups over the nine years I've been doing this work.

JP Young is a NZ Registered Music Therapist who has been working as a music therapist for the last sixteen years. Since 2017, he has worked within the forensic mental health setting. In addition to this, in 2021 he began working in palliative care at Mary Potter hospice.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Session 4.2
Saturday 12 September
12:20pm
Venue: 503-020

Multiple Relationships Within a Small Professional Community: Navigating Intersections in the Supervisory Relationship

Penny Warren

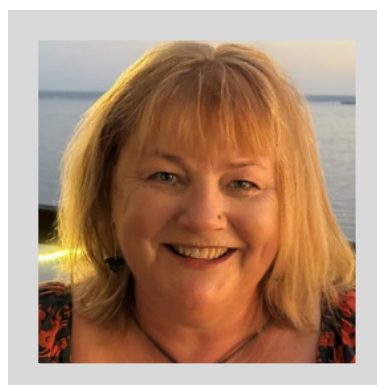
Supervision is an integral part of the music therapy profession in Aotearoa New Zealand which aligns with many other therapeutic professions internationally. In 2026 there are 89 NZ Registered Music Therapists who meet the professional registration criteria (New Zealand Registration Board, 2026). Whilst supervision has been identified as an important role in the development of professional identity for music therapists (Warren, 2015), our professional community is small (and growing). As such, multiple roles and relationships can exist, and these can impact the supervisory relationship. Zur (2016) states that in small professional communities careful navigation and consideration is needed to avoid misunderstanding and impact on both the supervisory relationship and the professional's practice. An essential process to increase consciousness of the different dynamics that exist in the supervisory relationship is an ongoing 'contracting' process, that is an integrated part of supervision. For example, revisiting professional and ethical boundaries, safety, and trust. This is in addition to the foundational, formal contract that outlines the terms and expectations of the supervisory relationship.

This interactive presentation will offer opportunities for participants to identify and explore the multiple roles and relationships that exist in the music therapy community. These intersections will be framed by the role and importance of 'contracting' in supervision, to feel better equipped to navigate different dynamics that may exist in a supervisory relationship. This presentation includes emerging ideas from my current PhD research.

References:

- Warren, P. & Rickson, D. (2016). What factors shape a music therapist? An investigation of music therapists' professional identity over time in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy*, 14, pp.55-81
- Zur, O. (2016). *Multiple Relationships in Psychotherapy and Counseling: Unavoidable, Common, and Mandatory Dual Relations in Therapy* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676135>

Penny Warren, NZ Registered Music Therapist, is a Lecturer on the Master of Music Therapy training programme at the New Zealand School of Music - Te Kōkī, Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka. Penny is a PhD candidate, co-facilitates SoundsWell Singers neurological choir and runs a music therapy supervision practice.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Session 5.1
Saturday 12 September
11:50am
Venue: 503-028

Culture in/and/as Music Therapy

Amodini Jayawardena

In this presentation, I will explore the role of culture in/and/as music therapy by examining the terms cultural competency, cultural safety, and cultural responsiveness. These terms are used in the professional and regulatory standards for registered music therapists in Aotearoa and Australia to address the dynamic interplay among music therapists, participants, and music as shaped by culture.

Each term and subsequent frameworks have unique origins, disciplinary foundations, and contextual bases, making them non-interchangeable. Over the years, these have been adopted and adapted by a range of disciplines and institutions and integrated into policy and regulatory frameworks.

The aims of this presentation are:

- To offer historical and professional context of how and why these terms came to be.
- To explore the adaptation of these terms in music therapy professional and regulatory standards in Aotearoa and Australia.
- To critically examine the relevance of engaging with and applying these terms in music therapy practice.

Amodini Jayawardena is a Registered Music Therapist and a PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. Her practice and research are guided by culture-centred and person-centred approaches. Her values as a practitioner and researcher are informed by postcolonial and post-humanist discourse. Amodini's PhD research explores the interplay between cultural and professional identity with a focus on othered perspectives within the music therapy profession.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Whakarongo, Tū Mana, Te Wā: Embracing te Ao Māori and weaving the Clinical-Cultural Pathway into an established Music Therapy Service

Rachel Foxell, Jessica Gerbic

Session 5.2
Saturday 12 September
12:20am
Venue: 503-028

This presentation explores the journey of intentionally interweaving the principles and practices of te Ao Māori within an established music therapy service in Aotearoa.

Whakarongo, Tū Mana, Te Wā speaks to listening deeply, upholding the mana of those we serve, and honouring the time and process required for authentic clinical cultural partnership. Over the past two years, the Raukatauri Music Therapy Trust has undertaken a haerenga (journey) to embed culturally grounded practices that better reflect and uplift Māori worldviews, whānau needs, and community aspirations.

With funding from Foundation North, Raukatauri engaged Dr Jess Gerbic of Pūkenga Psychology in February 2024 to undertake a comprehensive clinical-cultural consultation process. This presentation outlines how bicultural principles and a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi are being woven through clinical practice, supervision, and organisational structure, including the design and implementation of a clinical-cultural pathway for Māori clients and whānau.

The process included engaging with Māori whānau and mana whenua, strengthening staff cultural capability, incorporating tikanga and kaupapa Māori frameworks, and ensuring music therapy practice and documentation aligns with Māori models of health such as Te Whare Tapa Whā. These developments aim to create an environment where Māori clients and their whānau experience services that affirm identity, enhance connection, and support holistic wellbeing, while being delivered by non-Māori therapists.

This presentation will share key learnings, challenges, and opportunities arising from this ongoing mahi. It will highlight how music therapy - through its inherently relational, expressive, and culturally adaptable nature - offers a powerful and mana-enhancing approach for whānau and clients. By weaving these pathways together, we aim to model a service approach that is responsive, equitable, and grounded in partnership, supporting improved outcomes for Māori and for all our clients, and championing bicultural practice within music therapy and across the sector.



E mihi ana ki ngā tohu o nehe, o Tāmaki Makaurau e noho nei ahau
Nō Ingarangi raua nō Kōtarani ōku tīpuna
Ko Rachel Foxell tōku ingoa
E mahi ana au hei kaihaumanu pūoro

Rachel Foxell is a NZ Registered Music Therapist based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Rachel studied a Master of Music Therapy at the University of Melbourne and graduated in 2009, working in Melbourne for a further eight years before returning to Aotearoa with her young family in 2017. Rachel has experience working with people across the lifespan a variety of health, education, and community spaces, using music to meet each client's goals in a meaningful and authentic way. She has been the Clinical Services Manager at the Raukatauri Music Therapy Trust since August 2023.

Ko Kopukairora tōku Maunga
Ko Waitao tōku Awa
Ko Mātaatua tōku Waka
Ko Ngāti Pūkenga, Ko Ngāti Pīkiao ōku iwi
Ko Te-Whetu-O-Te-Rangi tōku Marae
Kei tamaki makaurau ahau e noho ana
Ko Jessica Gerbic tōku ingoa

Dr Jessica Gerbic: As a registered Clinical Psychologist, I believe in the importance of integrating clinical-cultural pathways so Māori clients and their whānau experience a seamless and supportive approach to their care. My commitment to maintaining the integrity of my psychological training while honoring cultural worldviews, particularly Te Ao Māori worldviews, drives my work. I strive to create a more inclusive and effective approach to mental health care that recognises and values the unique needs of Māori individuals and communities.

ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

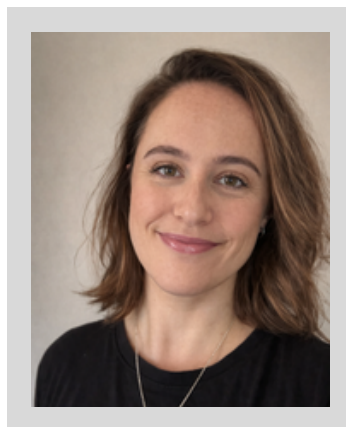
Finding a New Tempo: Rethinking Safety in Music Therapy Through Lived Experience

Helen Dowthwaite

Session 6.1
Saturday 12 September
2:00pm
Venue: 503-020

Music is widely understood within music therapy as supportive of wellbeing and regulation; however, emerging literature and clinical reflection suggest it is not inherently neutral and may contribute to dysregulation or harm, particularly for people with complex chronic illness. Drawing on lived experience of post-viral illness, Ehlers–Danlos Syndrome, neurodivergence and dysautonomia, this presentation highlights the frequent co-occurrence of nervous system, connective tissue and neurodevelopmental differences, and how these shape sensory processing, pain and regulation. It challenges assumptions about music’s effects and emphasises the need for careful assessment, pacing and clinically safe, responsive practice when working with this population.

Helen Dowthwaite is a NZ Registered Music Therapist and Director of Attuned Music Therapy. She has practised as a music therapist since 2012, working across various community settings including special education, aged care, palliative care and private practice. Throughout her career Helen has developed and established music therapy roles within organisations and community services across Aotearoa New Zealand.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Creating Cohesive Cultures: He waka eke noa 'We are all in the waka together'

Rani Allan

Session 6.2
Saturday 12 September
2:30pm
Venue: 503-020

This presentation explores how we reflect, function, create, and connect - first as individuals, then as professionals, and then within teams and communities - briefly widening the lens to humanity as a whole.

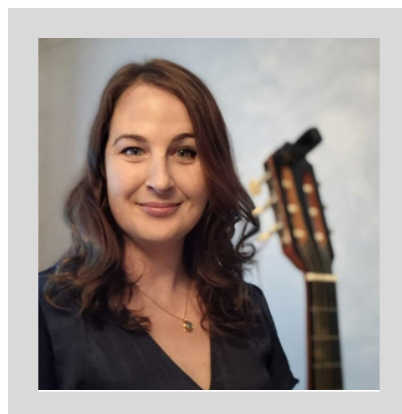
It asks: how do we grow music therapy as a profession, and what do we want it to become? What are our dreams, and how do we choose to practise and operate within systems—remembering that we created those systems in the first place?

“Poipoia te Kākano, kia puāwai” - Nurture the seed and it will grow.

The presentation weaves human stories of connection with songs of protest and power, inviting us to consider our impact on the world. It encourages curiosity, challenges some of our assumptions, and supports reflective planning for the future.

Rani Allan is a certified and registered NZ Registered Music Therapist with NZ Child Safety Certification to work with High and Complex Needs Children, Clinical lead and owner of Music for Life.

Rani holds a Master's degree in Music Therapy, graduating in 2012. She is passionate about the use of music in educational and medical settings, working across the lifespan with multidisciplinary teams in settings ranging from schools to mental health services to rest homes. Rani runs her private practice, Music for Life, with a small team of seven registered music therapists serving the Greater Wellington Region. She is mum to two beautiful girls, Eleanor and Molly, and partner to Danny (plus the many cats and a dog!). She has made Te Awakairangi her home since 2010.



ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

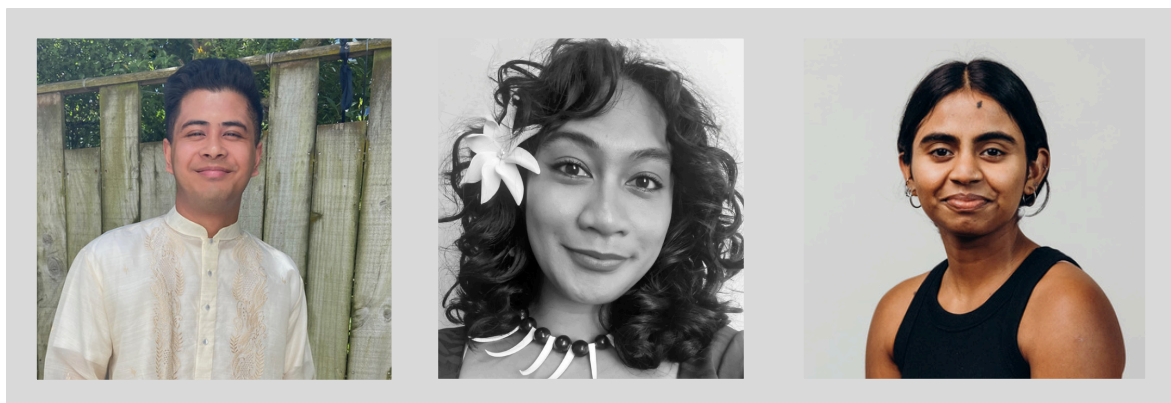
Session 7.1
Saturday 12 September
2:00pm
Venue: 503-028


The Weaving of Brown Threads

TJ Hernandez, June Potifara, Amodini Jayawardena

This panel / roundtable presentation centers the identity stories of three brown music therapists, Amodini, June, and TJ. Their brownness was an inseparable element that informed their research during their music therapy training and it continues to be an integral part of all their professional practices.

They wish to share how their collective brownness informs their work, while also exploring the differences in their cultural expressions across Sri Lanka, Sāmoa, and the Philippines. In the weaving of these brown threads, the three music therapists untangle and lay bare the effects of colonization on themselves, their practice, and the music therapy profession. They dream of a profession that represents more fully the people it seeks to serve.





TJ Hernandez is a Filipino NZ Registered Music Therapist who primarily works with young people and young adults in Poneke. He draws heavily from his Filipino ancestry and the way this shapes his approach to being a carer and advocate. TJ is passionate about supporting people to explore their identity and discover their innate strengths.

Across his work with the Little Musical Caravan and Skylight, TJ draws from child-lead, neuro-affirming, and trauma informed approaches. He seeks to create spaces where comfort, care, and sustenance are present at all times.

June Potifara is a Sāmoan NZ Registered Music Therapist based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa. Her practice is grounded in Pasifika and Indigenous knowledge, interwoven into Western-informed approaches.

June works with people across the lifespan, from children and rangatahi to adults and older adults in both mental health and disability contexts. She also facilitates Ma'au Music Therapy, her private practice. Committed to nurturing le vā' (the sacred relational space) and advocating for music therapy within her community, June works collaboratively with Pasifika organisations and support services to co-design music therapy programmes that respond to the unique needs of Pasifika communities.

Through culturally reflexive practice, she advocates for approaches that honour identity, challenge oppressive systems, and uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Her work centres relational ways of being and inclusive approaches grounded in collective and relational understandings of growth, connection, and healing.

Amodini Jayawardena is a Registered Music Therapist and a PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. Her practice and research are guided by culture-centred and person-centred approaches. Her values as a practitioner and researcher are informed by postcolonial and post-humanist discourse. Amodini's PhD research explores the interplay between cultural and professional identity with a focus on othered perspectives within the music therapy profession.

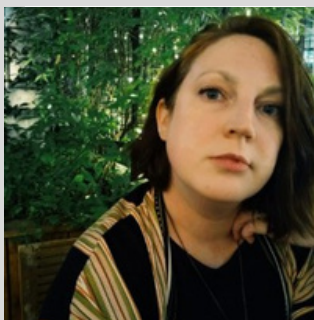
ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Session 8.1
Saturday 12 September
3:30pm
Venue: 503-020

Master of Creative Arts Therapies: Weaving together arts therapy modalities and interdisciplinary expertise in postgraduate professional education

Rebecca Weber, Alison Talmage, Naomi Pears-Scown, Jung-Hsu Wan

The Master of Creative Arts Therapy programme is a new course approved by the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) and under development at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, School of Creative Arts. This initiative aims to expand options for Master's level education for music therapists, dance-movement therapists, drama therapists, and art therapists. Building on the University's well-established Master of Dance Movement Therapy programme, the new course is a response to requests from practicum partners and the wider Aotearoa community. Our presentation will include reflections on the collaborative process of curricular development and our consultation with the New Zealand Music Therapy Registration Board, Australia New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association (ANZACATA), and Dance Therapy Association of Australasia (DTAA). At this conference, we hope to engage with music therapists, students, researchers, and others to exchange knowledge about professional practice in different modalities in diverse contexts, as well as answering questions about the new course.



Rebecca Weber, PhD, MFA, MA, RSME, RSDE, RSMT, Prov. Prof. DMT, THE, FHEA, is an Associate Professor in Dance Studies and Programme Director for the Masters of Dance Movement Therapy and Masters of Creative Arts Therapies at the University of Auckland. Rebecca is also a Registered Somatic Movement Educator and Therapist and Dance Movement Therapist. She researches intersections between dance, science, and somatics and multimodal creative practice. Her research includes live and digital dance works, installations, screendance works, journal articles, books, book chapters, and more. Rebecca's choreography has been presented and supported internationally.

Alison Talmage, PhD, NZ Registered Music Therapist, has worked with people with diverse needs across the lifespan in schools, the community, a specialist music therapy centre, private practice, and university research centres. Alison completed her PhD at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland under the supervision of Professor Suzanne Purdy CMNZ, Associate Professor Te Oti Rakena, and Adjunct Professor Daphne Rickson ONZM. Her doctoral research focused on improving professional practice as a music therapist leading neurological choirs, resulting in a novel model of practice documented in The VOCCAL Handbook. Alison co-leads the CeleBRation Choir (Centre for Brain Research) and has roles as a Professional Teaching Fellow in the Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Creative Arts and Research Assistant role in the Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research. She is a member of the Music Therapy New Zealand Board, a past member of the Music Therapy Registration Board, and former Editor of the New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy. Alison's work has been recognised by a 2020 Kiwibank Local Hero Medal (part of the New Zealander of the Year Awards) and the 2024 New Zealand Association of Gerontology Research Award.

Naomi Pears-Scown, PhD, MAAT (Clin) (Hons), PGCert (ICAMHS), GDip (Psychotherapy), BA, ANZACATA registered, is a clinician, educator, and researcher in the field of arts therapy. She completed her PhD at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland under the supervision of Professor Marek Tesar and Dr Esther Fitzpatrick, in the faculty of Education and Arts. Her research investigates the development of context of arts therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a focus on professional identity, clinical practice, and ancestral legacy, through arts-based research methodologies, in particular poetics and weaving. Her extensive clinical background spans work with children, adolescents, adults, and older people across mental health, education, and community settings, including Oranga Tamariki, and ACC sensitive claims. She is widely published in national and international arts therapy and education journals and has contributed to key sector conversations through peer-reviewed articles, conference presentations, and podcasts. Naomi has a wealth of experience in tertiary education, including lecturing, programme leadership, curriculum development, placement coordination, and postgraduate supervision at both Whitecliffe College and the University of Auckland.

Jung-Hsu Wan is a Taiwanese-New Zealand DMT/CAT practitioner who works in the intersection between dance movement therapy, psychology, and creative arts for the last 20 years. Rooted in her lived experience, her passion resides on bridging East-West worldviews, co-flourishing, and community resilience through reclaiming embodied, ecological, and ancestral wisdom in contemporary societies. Her work focuses on relational wellbeing, complex trauma, childhood adverse experiences, and neurodiversity with the commitment to culturally responsive and safety-ing practices. She is an ACC sensitive claim provider offering one-to-one and group work for sexual trauma survivors. She also serves as course lecturer, clinical supervisor, and practicum coordinator at the Master of Dance-Movement Therapy programme at University of Auckland. Jung-Hsu recently completed her PhD research in the faculty of Arts and Education.

ABSTRACTS AND PROFILES

Session 9.1
Saturday 12 September
3:30pm
Venue: 503-028

Young and Becoming: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Youngism and Professional Identity in Music Therapy

Zoe Ioannou

Picture this: a newly graduated music therapist in their early twenties entering the music therapy workforce, navigating professional spaces alongside colleagues whose years of lived and professional experience appear far greater than their own.

This is youngism – the prejudice and discrimination towards people who are perceived as young, is rarely examined in allied health spaces including music therapy. Early career practitioners may experience a dynamic that their age is perceived as inexperience which can hinder professional and personal confidence, authority and relationships with colleagues and clients. This paper presents an autoethnographic case study, uncovering the lived experience of youngism during music therapy training and post-graduation working as a music therapist.

Utilising reflexive journaling, clinical supervision and relevant literature, the paper examines how age-based assumptions impacted interactions with colleagues and clients. Through thematic analysis, the paper identifies strategies used to navigate youngism, including reflexive practice, relational advocacy, and the use of musical competence as a form of professional legitimacy. The paper contributes to broader discussions on power, age, identity, and early-career development in allied health professions. By foregrounding the subjective experience of young music therapy practitioners, the paper invites critical dialogue about age-related bias and calls for more supportive professional cultures during music therapy training. Youngism can recognise the diverse forms of expertise that can add value to the evolution of music therapists who make up the field.

Zoe Ioannou is a kiwi-born and bred, Greek NZ Registered Music Therapist. Zoe graduated in 2026 from New Zealand School of Music, Te Koki, Victoria University of Wellington where she gained an Honours degree in Music Studies, and a Masters in Music Therapy. Zoe has experience as a music therapist in early intervention, primary and high school aged students and in aged care settings, all encompassing a strengths-based practice of her clients. She also gigs and DJs around town with her saxophone and loves being part of the big, wonderful and creative musical whānau here in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington and believes music is a powerful way to contribute and stand in communities together, not alone.



MUSICKING

All you need is Love Me Do: Medleys in Music Therapy

JP Young

Session 10

Saturday 12 September

4:00pm

Venue: Plenary room 501-110

This session will focus on some of the songs I've used over the years, based on the idea of the medley: taking two or three well-known songs and combining them into something new. I acknowledge it is a simple idea, but it may be helpful for other music therapists (if they aren't already using them).

Since they are based on well-known songs, there is less anxiety about 'getting the words wrong'. The 'medley-song' can therefore engage clients who may struggle with literacy. They have been useful in my forensic mental health work, as well as when I work with dementia patients and in the adult disability field.

They are also a great way of moving 'away from the page' - instead of looking down at a lyric sheet, participants can look at each other and just focus on singing together. This has been particularly helpful in my palliative care work.

JP Young is a NZ Registered Music Therapist who has been working as a music therapist for the last sixteen years. Since 2017, he has worked within the forensic mental health setting. In addition to this, in 2021 he began working in palliative care at Mary Potter hospice.



MUSICKING

Session 11

Sunday 13 September

8:30am

Venue: Plenary room 501-110

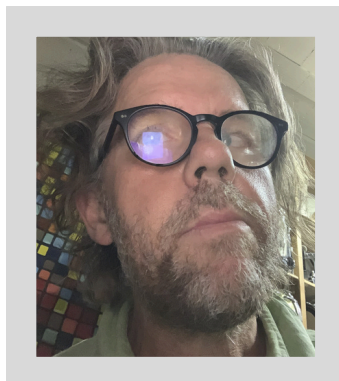
SPOONS - The People's Instrument

Chris O'Connor

When considering unconventional musical instruments, the humble spoons may not immediately come to mind. Yet these ordinary utensils carry an extraordinary lineage and have evolved into a vibrant percussion instrument—particularly within American folk music.

This experiential workshop, aligned with the conference theme Weaving Connections, explores how musical spoons link ancient traditions, cultural histories, and contemporary music therapy practice.

Chris O'Connor is a NZ Registered Music Therapist and freelance musician currently practicing with the Raukatauri Music Therapy Trust, focusing on special education with disabled children. Chris's work in corrections across 2023 – 2025 saw him awarded the Regional Arts-in-Corrections Educator of the Year Award. Chris's work as a drummer in bands has taken him around the world, performing with Neil Finn, Richard Nunns, The Phoenix Foundation, Don McGlashan, Tami Nielson, Jonathan Crayford and many others. As an educator, Chris has worked in schools as an itinerant teacher, and on university music programs in artist teacher roles. Chris is also an award winning composer, having worked in theatre, film and dance. As a recording artist and session musician, Chris appears on over 60 albums, as well as numerous film and documentary soundtracks. Chris currently lives in Tamaki Makaurau with his partner and two teenage children.



POSTERS

From theory to clinical practice: Weaving music therapy into psychedelic-assisted therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Carlos Riegelhaupt Landreani

I am a NZ Registered Music Therapist based in Wellington, with specialist training in Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) and Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy (PAT) with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies and the Integrative Psychiatry Institute (IPI), USA.

Dr. Helen Bonny's pioneer work in PAT gave me a deep curiosity to learn about how music supports altered states, meaning-making, and healing. In 2024, I presented about the role of music therapy in PAT at the Music Therapy New Zealand Conference in Wellington, and in 2025 presented this work at the Australian Music Therapy Association Conference in Melbourne.

In 2025, I coordinated Te Ao Oro (Sound Space) and co-facilitated experiential sessions at the University of Auckland's "Community Strategising about Psychedelics in Aotearoa: A National Discussion." I also facilitated a session on music in altered states at a Tū Wairua wānanga, Rangiwhao Marae, Tairāwhiti (Gisborne).

I currently work within a clinical multidisciplinary team (MDT) which has Medsafe approval to provide PAT for existential distress in a palliative care setting. My role includes the development of an assessment tool for curating personalised and culturally responsive music programmes, the use of music within preparation and integration phases, offering professional development within the MDT around the use of music, and offering in-person music therapy - including responsive music making where appropriate - during dosing sessions.

I am passionate about raising awareness of music therapy within the rapidly developing field of PAT and supporting the integration of music therapy within psychedelic healthcare in Aotearoa and abroad.



POSTERS

From Residents to Recording Artists: Using a Portable Studio in Aged Care Music Therapy

Luke Stothart

This poster explores how a portable recording station can be used in aged care to support legacy-based music therapy. Across multiple recording initiatives (including Christmas and Aotearoa/New Zealand themed albums) residents recorded vocals and instruments, contributing to shared creative outcomes beyond the therapy room.

Working towards a tangible product supported motivation, purpose, and sustained engagement. Framing those who participated as artists, rather than clients, supported shifts in identity, agency, and self-expression. Opportunities to share the music, such as listening parties, further strengthened connection, pride, and a sense of community among residents, staff, and whānau.

Accessible music technology enabled participation across a range of abilities while maintaining high-quality creative outputs.

QR codes included in this poster provide direct access to selected recordings, allowing the impact of the work to be experienced firsthand.

Luke Stothart is a NZ Registered Music Therapist who began studying at Victoria University of Wellington in 2013, completing a Bachelor of Music in Sonic Arts and Music Technology, where his interest in music technology first developed. He went on to complete a Master of Music Therapy in 2018 and is now a Registered Music Therapist at the Raukauri Music Therapy Trust in Tāmaki Makaurau.

In his current role, Luke has continued to integrate music technology into clinical practice, establishing a Music Technology portfolio that includes the development of a portable audio recording station. His work focuses on using recording and production processes to support engagement, creativity, and identity.



POSTERS

The VOCCAL Handbook: A Toolkit for Neurological Choirs

Alison Talmage, Suzanne Purdy CNZM, Te Oti Rakena, Daphne Rickson ONZM

Neurological choirs are singing groups for adults with acquired neurological conditions that impact communication, social participation, and quality of life. The VOCCAL Handbook is an outcome of practice-based doctoral action research at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland. The Handbook is presented through a music therapy lens, but aimed at an interprofessional audience with clearly defined scopes of practice. The VOCCAL framework comprises six elements: Vision, Outcomes, Communities, Conventions, Administration, and Leadership. The Handbook – currently undergoing development as a digital resource - offers guidelines, templates and resources. The strength of this resource is its grounding in music therapy professional practice and practice-based research. Research data included an extensive literature review; audio-visual analysis of choir sessions; qualitative document analysis; and interviews and focus groups with professionals (local and international music therapists and speech-language therapists), choir members, and choir volunteers. The study also included arts-based research methods including improvisation, singing, and songwriting; poetry; drawing and use of other visuals; and photo-elicitation. Recommendations have been made for interprofessional practice, neurological choir theory, future music therapy research, and community engagement. Dissemination of the research findings and handbook includes presentations, publications, choir performances, a website, and merchandise.



POSTERS

Dr Alison Talmage, PhD, NZ Registered Music Therapist, has worked with people with diverse needs across the lifespan in schools, the community, a specialist music therapy centre, private practice, and university research centres. Alison completed her PhD at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland under the supervision of Professor Suzanne Purdy CMNZ, Associate Professor Te Oti Rakena, and Adjunct Professor Daphne Rickson ONZM. Her doctoral research focused on improving professional practice as a music therapist leading neurological choirs, resulting in a novel model of practice documented in The VOCCAL Handbook. Alison co-leads the CeleBRation Choir (Centre for Brain Research) and has roles as a Professional Teaching Fellow in the Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Creative Arts and Research Assistant role in the Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research. She is a member of the Music Therapy New Zealand Board, a past member of the Music Therapy Registration Board, and former Editor of the New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy. Alison's work has been recognised by a 2020 Kiwibank Local Hero Medal (part of the New Zealander of the Year Awards) and the 2024 New Zealand Association of Gerontology Research Award.

Professor Suzanne Purdy, CMNZ (Te Rarawa, Ngāi Takoto) is a Professor in Te Kura Mātai Hinengaro | School of Psychology at Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland. She has a clinical background in audiology and broad research interests spanning hearing and speech science, music and dance for people with neurological conditions and health equity for Māori and Pacific communities. Suzanne is past Chair of International Evoked Response Study Group. Her current roles include Te Huinga Hinengaro | Centre for Brain Research (CBR) Principal Investigator (supporting the CeleBRation Choir and Gavel Club), Co-director of Eisdell Moore Centre for Hearing and Balance Research, Co-lead of Te Titoki Mataora Mātauranga Māori module and membership of the CBR Māori Advisory Rōpū.

Associate Professor Te Oti Rakena (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Ruanui, Kāi Tahu) is an active performer, researcher and national award winning tertiary teacher. An American-trained singer, he studied at New England Conservatory in Boston with master teacher Edward Zambara. He received his doctorate in vocal studies from the University of Texas at Austin and undertook three years' post-doctoral study in Germany. Te Oti has a distinguished reputation as a quality solo performer. Since returning to New Zealand he has become known for his performances in boutique operas and his commitment to premiering works on themes of national significance. He has participated in a number of research initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education for indigenous and minority students in New Zealand, and internationally, and is a respected researcher leader in the field of community music. He works closely with other researchers interested in non-western research methodologies and associated analytical frameworks. He has been a guest editor for the International Journal of Community Music (IJCM), past chair of Community Music Activities, a research commission of ISME, and a founding member of the Decolonising and Indigenising Music Education (DIME) Special Interest Group for the International Society for Music Education (ISME). He is currently a Principal Investigator on the Centre of Brain Research, and expert advisor for Centre for Arts and Social Transformation at University of Auckland and to the Laurier Centre for Community Music at Wilfred Laurier University, Ontario, Canada.

Adjunct Professor Daphne Rickson, ONZM, PhD, NZ Registered Music Therapist, was an Associate Professor at the New Zealand School of Music - Te Kōkī, Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington, retiring to the role of Adjunct Professor in 2021. Daphne is President Emeritus and Life Member of Music Therapy New Zealand; was named as an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to music therapy (2022); and is a recipient of the World Federation of Music Therapy Lifetime Achievement Award (2023).

POSTERS

The sound of presence: live vs recorded classical guitar across early childhood, aged care, and home settings

Nivisha Singh

This poster presents a student-led exploratory inquiry examining how live classical guitar may foster different forms of connection and engagement compared with prerecorded music of a similar genre in everyday community environments. In early childhood education and retirement-home settings, relaxing playlists (e.g. Spotify) are commonly used to create a calming auditory atmosphere. While such recordings may support relaxation and mood regulation, the presence of live music can introduce a distinct dimension of interpersonal connection, embodied awareness, and group interaction.

The project asks: How might live music function as a relational thread in communal spaces by shaping emotional atmosphere and interaction when compared with recorded music? The inquiry draws on reflective field notes and structured observations across multiple sessions in each setting, alongside brief informal reflections from adult staff and, where appropriate, older participants. Observations focus on visible indicators including shared attentiveness, social interaction, emotional expression, and derived post-session conversation.

Nivisha Singh is a Year 12 IB student at Kristin School in Auckland, New Zealand, whose emerging work sits at the intersection of psychology, music, wellbeing, and youth leadership. A classical guitarist, she has performed in early childhood education centres and retirement home settings, where she has become interested in how live music can shape attention, emotional atmosphere, participation, and human connection across generations. At Kristin School, Nivisha serves as co-Chair of the UNESCO Club and co-Chair of the State of Mind Club, roles through which she helps connect UNESCO values with the wider school community while supporting student leadership and engagement in the area of wellbeing. These experiences have strengthened her interest in the relationship between creative expression, mental wellness, and community belonging.

Nivisha plans to study Psychology and Music at university and is particularly interested in how creative practice can contribute to emotional wellbeing, social connection, and meaningful community engagement.



POSTERS

Transition to School: The weaving of partnerships to create a unique school readiness program.

Samantha Schoeler-Jones

Transition to School (T2S) is an Australian multidisciplinary school-readiness program that supports at-risk children aged four-to-five years and their caregivers as they transition to primary school. The 16-week program is facilitated by a team of registered music therapists and speech pathologists.

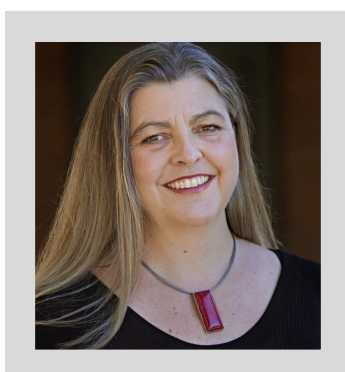
Drawing on population and program data from where the T2S program is delivered, children of greatest concern are not accessing the recommended 600 hours of 'quality' early learning in the year before school, nor engaging in early childhood services, health services, or community outreach programs. These children are known to be at risk of experiencing greater challenges in achieving language, literacy and academic success. An initial program evaluation in 2019 demonstrated that the T2S program helped children improve their self-regulation, social competence, language and communication skills. Additionally, the program helped build parents' capacity to support their child's early literacy and the transition to school.

This poster will discuss the development and structure of the T2S program. It will demonstrate the diverse, creative and collaborative processes of a multidisciplinary team that led to them winning the 2023 ZEST Award for Outstanding Community Partnership and being recognised by the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) as a 'Promising Program'.

Samantha Schoeler-Jones completed a Bachelor of Music in Classical Performance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 1991. After graduating, she commenced her performance and teaching careers, including performing casually with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and teaching at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

As a musician, Sam had always been curious about music therapy and embraced the opportunity to move to Berlin in 1997 to complete a Diploma in Music Therapy at The Institute fuer Musiktherapie.

As a Registered Music Therapist, Sam has been employed by Play Matters Australia in their program, Sing&Grow, since 2010, becoming a Senior Clinical Specialist in 2023. Commencing in 2017, Sing&Grow became a Community Partner with Mission Australia in its Commonwealth Government-funded Communities for Children Program, where Sam has provided early intervention music therapy services to families and children aged 0-5 years.



PERFORMANCE

CeleBRation Choir

led by Jenny Gordon and Alison Talmage

Saturday 12 September
Morning tea 10:00am
Venue: Atrium

The CeleBRation Choir will present a short programme of songs, with opportunities for audience participation. The choir is a community singing group for adults and older people living with an acquired neurological condition that impacts social participation and communication (speech, language, memory). As a semi-open group with communication goals, the Choir bridges community and clinical music therapy (Grady & McFerran, 2007).

Therapeutic community singing is based on physiological, psychosocial and aesthetic considerations – all of which may be compromised by neurological conditions, illness, or medication side effects. These link with a biopsychosocial-spiritual approach, related to Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985). Our research has shown that participation in neurological choirs correlates with a high quality of life (Thompson et al., 2022).

Our approach, documented in the research-based VOCCAL Handbook (Talmage, 2025), includes warm-ups, exercises and songs, adapted to maximise participation and to mitigate speech, language, and memory challenges. No prior experience is required, although some participants have choral experiences. All share an interest in music but have diverse musical preferences, so our repertoire, developed collaboratively, includes a wide range of popular, cultural, and original songs.



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