

Iceland

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Tonstofa Valgerdar
Reykjavik, Iceland

Snapshot

Area

103,000 square kilometers, a European island country in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Population

318,452

Official Language

Icelandic (a North Germanic language)

Ethnic Groups

Icelanders are a homogeneous mixture of Norse and Gaelic descendants who settled in Iceland around 874 AD.

Median Age

35.4 years

Children under 5

23,041

Sources

http://www.pbase.com/orvaratli/icelands_seaside

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland>

<http://www.statice.is/>



“When I feel sad and I hear this kind of music I want to cry. When I feel good and I hear this music it is like God is sending it to me.”

–Jón Emil, a three-year-old boy

Demographics

Music therapy was first introduced in Iceland in 1970. Since that time, between one and six music therapists have been practicing in the country in any given year.

Background Information

There is one professional music therapy organization in Iceland, *Fismús, The Icelandic Music Therapy Association*. It was founded in 1997 and currently holds six active members. Icelandic music therapists are educated abroad and have graduated from at least seven different academic institutions in the United States, Europe, and the Nordic countries. Music therapy in Iceland reflects the diverse backgrounds, schooling and experiences of the pioneers in this field. Practices are eclectic in nature and characterized by a variety of opinions, methods, techniques and philosophies. At least sixteen Icelanders have degrees in music therapy. Music therapy is not a recognized profession and has not been granted official government approval. Practicing music therapists are not licensed and there is no designated music therapy position within the social infrastructure. However, music therapists have been

employed by the state. They have occupied teaching positions or have been hired as contractors and have had considerable freedom to shape their music therapy practices. The Icelandic music therapy association has developed a code of ethics and standards of practice and verifies the professionalism of its members with a signed document. The association’s campaign for an official approval on a governmental level continues.

Common Approaches

The institutions in Iceland serving special needs children and their families within the framework of EI are: Landspítalinn - University hospital and other pediatric hospital departments and neonatal units around the country, community child healthcare services situated in various health care clinics in the capital, its suburbs and major towns around the country, the different regional offices concerning affairs of the handicapped (ROAH), day-care systems, kindergarten schools, and various associations which offer educational and counseling services to parents, such as Sjónarhóll, in Reykjavík, and The State Diagnostic and Counseling Center situated in one of the suburbs of Reykjavík.

The State Diagnostic and Counseling Center is the main evaluation and habilitation center in Iceland for children

and adolescents with various types of developmental disabilities. Its main goal is to evaluate these clients, provide counseling to parents and caregivers, and offer guidance to teachers and therapists serving the family. Another important aspect of the center's work is to organize congresses, workshops and lectures on various topics of interest to parents and professionals.

For the past few years, music groups for infants and young children have been run in Iceland by music teachers but are rarely attended by children with special needs. Within the framework of early intervention and in the rapidly growing field of infant health, varied therapeutic services are offered, but music therapy is not yet one of them. With the exception of some children with special needs who have received music therapy at Tónstofa Valgerdar and the Children's Hospital, music therapy has not been accessible to young children with disabilities and their caretakers in Iceland. There is still much work to be done.

Prominent Publications

Three Masters' degree research projects have been undertaken by Icelandic music therapy students graduating from Aalborg University in Denmark. The client groups in these studies focused on patients with Alzheimer's disease, cancer patients, and hospitalized children. Presently a Ph.D. research study is in progress at Aalborg University to be defended in 2011. The research title is: "Music-caring within the framework of early intervention. The Lived Experience of a group of mothers of young children with special needs, participating in a music therapy group."

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Rafnsdóttir, S. F. (2007). Musik med et glimt i øjet: Humor, glæde, sjov og leg i musikkterapi med børn på hospitaler [With a twinkle in the eye - joy, fun and play in music therapy with hospitalized children]. Aalborg

University.

Úlfarsdóttir, L. (2002). *The relative effect of short-term interpersonal cognitive problem solving therapy with young children*. London: University of Leicester in England.

About the Author



Valgerdur Jonsdottir, MA, RMT graduated as a piano teacher from the Reykjavík College of Music in 1980 and finished her bachelor's degree in music therapy from the University of Kansas, U.S.A. She did her clinical practicum at the University of Texas Medical Branch and became a registered music therapist in 1986. Jónsdóttir graduated with a master's degree 2004 from Sogn and Fjordane University College, Norway and is currently working towards a doctorate in music therapy from Aalborg University, Denmark. Jónsdóttir worked as a clinical music therapist at LSH Child Psychiatric Hospital, from 1987 to 2009. From 1986 to present, she has headed a special music school, Tónstofa Valgerdar, and worked there as a private music therapy practitioner and a special music teacher.

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