

MA Music Therapy symposium: innovation, inclusivity and music therapy

Symposium schedule

Session 1: 9:30 am–11:00am

Driving organisational change for full inclusion: insights from Sinfonía por el Perú

What does it take to transform a globally recognised music education initiative into a fully inclusive, community-driven model?

As a Fulbright Specialist with Sinfonía por el Perú, Dr Petra Kern has been at the forefront of this transformation. She has collaborated with the special education team and leadership to serve over 6,000 youths of all abilities and their families. Together, they are creating a system where music becomes a powerful tool for equity, empowerment, and social change.

Inspired by Singapore's vision to foster inclusive communities, this presentation highlights key strategies for inclusion, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to meaningful community participation and lifelong support.

Dr Kern also introduces findings from structured interviews with adolescents with disabilities, offering firsthand insights into their aspirations, challenges and expectations for inclusion. Participants will learn about the Parent Package—a framework designed to enhance disability awareness and future planning for families and educators.

The audience will be invited to share their experiences with inclusion practices in Singapore as part of an interactive Q&A.

Session 2: 11:30am–1:00pm

Smart tech, smarter inclusion: music-based innovations for an inclusive world

Assistive technology plays a pivotal role in empowering persons with disabilities to live independently.

This interactive presentation highlights adaptive music-making tools—ranging from low-tech aids (visual schedules, PECS) to high-tech innovations (speech-generating devices, AR/VR, and AI-driven music applications)—to enhance participation in music therapy and education.

The audience will be invited to share their experiences with inclusion practices in Singapore as part of an interactive Q&A.

Session 3: 2:00pm–3:30pm

The creative arts therapies in healthcare and education: advancing practice, research, and education in personalised care and services

This expert panel discussion brings together Dr Petra Kern, LASALLE's creative arts faculty and industry professionals to explore the evolving role of technology in person-centric, data-driven research and innovative teaching.

With Singapore's push toward digital transformation, this session encourages critical reflection on balancing technological innovation, including the use of AI with human-centered care.

The discussion will touch on

- **Clinical practice:** Tech-assisted workflows, adaptive interventions and data-driven evaluations to enhance therapeutic outcomes.
- **Data-driven research:** The use of machine learning algorithms, predictive analytics, and big data as part of evidence-based research to identify treatment trends, measure intervention efficacy, and personalise therapeutic approaches.
- **Innovative teaching:** Integrating digital literacy, ethical AI use and evolving professional standards into creative arts education to prepare the next generation of practitioners.

As the rapid development of technology continues to reshape the future of healthcare and creative arts therapies, this discussion will explore both its transformative potential and ethical considerations, positioning Singapore as a leader in tech-integrated, inclusive and evidence-based practices.

About the speaker

Petra Kern, Ph.D., MT-BC, MTA, DMtG, is a globally recognised leader in music therapy, renowned for her dedication to inclusion and evidence-based practice.

As a Fulbright Specialist (2024–27), she collaborates with Sinfonía por el Perú to strengthen its Special Education Program, guiding the organisation toward a fully inclusive community-driven model.

Dr Kern will serve as an Artist in Residence at LASALLE College of the Arts from March to April 2025, contributing to the MA Music Therapy programme through teaching research and public engagement.

Specialising in early childhood music therapy, particularly for children with autism spectrum disorder, Dr Kern has conducted applied research at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill, earning the AMTA Research/Publication Award for her contributions.

She has also been actively involved in higher education, teaching at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, supporting the establishment of the first music therapy programme at the University of Rhode Island, and designing over 20 hybrid courses at the University of Louisville.

As a former President of the World Federation of Music Therapy and recipient of its International Service Award, she has played a pivotal role in shaping global policies, education, and clinical practice in music therapy globally.

Dr Kern is the founder of Music Therapy Consulting and De La Vista Publisher, where she spearheads capacity-building initiatives, strategic development, and international knowledge transfer in music therapy and inclusive education. She also serves as the editor of *imagine*, an award-winning multimedia e-publication, recognised for its innovative contributions to early childhood music therapy, accessibility and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Through cutting-edge research, cross-sector partnerships and digital innovation, Dr. Kern continues to drive transformational change in music therapy, ensuring that individuals of all abilities have access to high-quality, person-centered care and education worldwide.

Find out more at <https://musictherapy.biz/drpetrakern/>