

# MUT TALKS:

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECT FOR MUSIC THERAPISTS

David J. Gamella González

<https://doi.org/10.59028/misostenido.2023.23>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9834-954X>

Nonconformity is a pathway to explore new possibilities. This premise can elucidate the genesis of the inaugural entrepreneurship event for music therapists, termed as MUTtalks, which transpired at the SALA ARAPILES theater in Madrid on June 30, 2023. This event constituted a novel deviation in the curriculum of the Music Therapy Master's program at UNIR, for which, as the coordinator, I am committed to fostering innovative education and perpetually refining the learning experience. A significant portion of my management focus revolves around ascertaining the applicability of ideas and theories shared within the program to students' professional trajectories.

In essence, I place value on the conversion of potential energy into kinetic energy. This translation is indispensable for realizing the fundamental objective of a postgraduate degree. The amalgamation of these forces must harmonize to yield fruitfulness.

Attaining a high level of learning among all students presents a formidable challenge to the teaching faculty due to the influence of diverse factors. Students' motivations and expectations vary significantly, influenced by factors such as their diverse backgrounds. In the current landscape, our aspiration is to create training resources that are substantively enriching and invigorating, thereby enabling music therapy to serve as a tool for personal development, enhancing their life and vo-



cational pursuits. Confronting this challenge necessitates asking myriad questions and critically examining established norms. A postgraduate program constitutes a complex mechanism necessitating ongoing fine-tuning. This involves investigating its processes, uncovering limitations, envisioning novel prospects, and designing initiatives that stimulate and amplify students' talents. A master's program must chart new avenues and incite progress, particularly in fields like music therapy, where established professional niches are scarce. In such a context, a profound vocational impetus is requisite to establish a practice, propose projects to institutions, or specialize in specific clinical populations. Hence, the pursuit of novel opportunities and change serves as a testament to vitality, evolution, and enhancement, becoming an integral facet of our identity. This,

undoubtedly, forms the rationale behind the inception of MUTtalks.

The concept germinated in early 2020, amid the onset of the SARCov2 pandemic. The substantial constraints faced in our field prompted the exploration of fresh entrepreneurial avenues. Initially, the prospect of orchestrating a music therapy symposium was entertained. Together with Fernando Fernández Company, a colleague and music therapy instructor in the master's program, I embarked on the development of this project. However, due to logistical challenges and the constraints imposed by confinement measures, its execution became unfeasible. Rather than abandoning the concept, its format continued to evolve, culminating in the creation of a forum and a logo intended to counteract prevailing circumstances. Concurrently, efforts were directed towards establishing an innovative telehealth-based practice system for students. We adapted and cataloged an extensive array of therapeutic



resources in digital format to uphold instructional objectives and ensure the acquisition of competencies. This topic warrants further exploration, but it is deserving of a separate discussion at a later time.

With the return to what was once deemed the "new normality," the time had come to rekindle the project, albeit with a different impetus. The notion of convening a congress to continue presenting works of music therapy no longer holds merit, given the vast and diverse array of offerings in this domain. My aim was to propose a pragmatic and evocative event, tethered to everyday reality and rooted in experiential engagement, where communication could be emotionally resonant and galvanizing. To achieve this, a disruptive format was imperative.

All my projects commence with an image. The symbolic essence of visual forms enables us to actualize the envisioned and calibrate the bounds of the unimaginable. In this instance, I drew inspiration from the two steel pieces by pop artist Robert Indiana that form the words "LOVE" and "HOPE," a project initiated in the 1970s. The first two were installed on 6th and 7th Avenues in New York, and their replicas now grace more than fifty public spaces across all continents. This line of thought led me to conceive the idea of fashioning a form, a landmark around which convergence could occur. Sculptures in public spaces imbue the surroundings with renewed significance, conferring formal identity and distinctive symbolism.

However, the quest for an appropriate name and form that could empower this novel gathering space to foster the personal projects of aspiring music therapists remained unfulfilled. I sought a word that resonated with strength and possessed visual impact. I perused other word-sculptures displayed in various cities. All were monumental installations or featured vibrant typographies from the Grotesque and Sans Serif families. Undoubtedly, the phonetics of the TED brand inspired me to seek an interjection possessing similar attributes within the term "music therapy." I initiated the process with preliminary sketches and strokes. Graphic models eventually gave way to a three-dimensional scale representation to visualize its appearance. While I embarked with a purely typographic concept, I eventually gravitated toward a more sculptural and voluminous design to enhance visual impact. The reaction of Alessia Fattorini, also a friend and a faculty

member in the master's program, upon witnessing the ensemble, conveyed that the term "MUT" encapsulated the anticipated essence. Its pronunciation exuded vigor, its content held referential weight, and its form possessed distinction. Ethical format serves the concept, and the notion revolved around utility.

In the final stages, I crafted an extensive-scale model in preparation for its integration with the scenography of the theater that would host the event, for it was clear that an auditorium would serve as the optimal launchpad. Within UNIR, we had at our disposal the SALA ARAPILES, a compact yet ideal space meeting the prerequisites for hosting the event. Positioned at the heart of Madrid, it offered an intimate setting without incurring substantial costs.

With this foundational groundwork in place, we ventured into September 2022. As the pandemic-induced social constraints eased, the prospect of an in-person gathering became tenable. The time had come to communicate the project's concept to the stakeholders within UNIR's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. My initial contact was with Ernesto Monsalve, the director of the music department, who found the proposal intriguing with significant potential. Subsequently, the concept was elevated to the dean's office. I prepared an explanatory dossier, enabling Víctor Padilla and Carmen Arenas to comprehend the extent of the proposal. Their response was immediate, granting us full endorsement. With the prototype endorsed, the next step involved engaging additional individuals to translate ideas into action, ushering us into February 2023.



Design by David Gamella



The approach diverged from the conventional congress format wherein theories, projects, and methodologies of music therapy were discussed. MUTtalks was designed to transcend these confines, metamorphosing into a professional conduit. The objective was to cultivate avenues for labor entrepreneurship, crafting a narrative of "yes, we can." Our students already acquire a profound level of knowledge, rendering further



theoretical contributions superfluous. Instead, our focus shifted to sharing how others have paved their path. Experience serves as a wellspring of motivation, capable of germinating fresh projects and professional concepts.

Given the considerable leap from classroom learning to professional practice, topics such as music therapy groups, intervention techniques, and methodological resources took a backseat. Our intention was to elucidate how one can embark on a journey to construct a life project centered around the professional practice of music therapy. This realm encompasses themes that often remain unaddressed in traditional curricula, encompassing aspects like taxation, budget creation, prerequisites for establishing a music therapy center, optimization of data garnered during sessions and its subsequent integration within a scientific framework, therapist self-care and personal development, and the significance of sustained guidance during the process of professional establishment.

This latent necessity resonates within all students. Since assuming the helm of the Master's program in 2019, I have consistently observed the same uncertainties: how can all this knowledge be applied? What steps are requisite to becoming a music therapist? How can one initiate the development of a project? My aspiration is to foster transferability and facilitate responses that direct the talents of graduates towards societal contribution. In every educational equation, the manner of application inevitably remains an elusive component, given that the "what," the "for whom," the "when," the "how," and the "why" have already been established.

This motivation has enabled me to develop a series of initiatives, of which MUTtalks is just one piece of the puzzle. Among them, I'd like to highlight the MeeT logo sessions, the PESCU therapeutic supervision project, the music therapy research journal MiSOSTENiDO, and the GiM research group within the UNIR environment. Additionally, there are continuous training programs like FORESTS and mentoring START, both created in collaboration with the professional association of music therapy HDOSOL. These initiatives are further complemented by informative projects such as ÁGORA, ENCUNTROS, and MUSICOTERAPIA CON PERSPECTIVA DE GÉNERO, which are available on YouTube and Twitch channels.

All these proposals share a common narrative within a framework that I once referred to as MUSICOTERAPIA360, an ecosystem of interconnected forces aimed at guiding those who are embarking on their journey in music therapy. As you can observe, MUTtalks isn't an isolated endeavor, but rather a link within a larger chain of transmission and learning opportunities.

The format for this new pedal stroke will be based on a series of micro-presentations in which academic rigor will be combined with a certain informal tone. Although we are all university professors, we had to abandon the concept of "teaching one more class." In addition to oral communication, live music had to be present at the event; this was inexcusable. At first, the possibility of bringing in an ambient jazz-blues band was considered, but this option was rejected because, although very static, it would feel somewhat artificial in relation to the event's overall theme. Therefore, we opted for a more substantial musical offering. I invited two music therapists who collaborate on sessions within the context of pediatric palliative care: Nieves Frechilla and Katia Márquez. They accepted the challenge without hesitation, even before all the necessary permits were approved. They will be responsible for enhancing the impact of the spoken word. They will present some of their therapeutic experiences in a songwriting format developed with patients and family members over the past year. This extended presentation, as their interventions were distributed throughout the afternoon, served as a revealing creative example and an excellent therapeutic practice that undoubtedly moved all those present. They showcased the profound impact of being a music therapist and what it means to accompany individuals.

With this defined structure, all that remained was to finalize the lineup. We outlined the theme of each presentation, invited the speakers, and conveyed the desired style for the day. Similar to those overseeing the musical aspect, they also readily agreed. During the initial meetings, I emphasized what MUTtalks should not be. The key was to achieve a highly dynamic narrative style; hence, time slots were limited to approximately 25 minutes per lecture, and the content was presented in a dramatic and engaging manner.

As everyone was busy preparing their talks, I collaborated with Beatriz Amorós, who is associated with the direction of the music department, to address all organizational matters from the university's perspective. From the beginning of February until the day of the premiere, we were fully immersed in the preparations. During this period, we received invaluable assistance from Sandra Gallardo in managing financial matters. She provided support with negotiating contracts, budgets, and navigating through various institutional challenges as they arose. Additionally, we had the backing of the business area within the faculty. Cristina Rodríguez and María Vélez assisted us in managing all technical aspects related to recording and broadcasting. In collaboration with the GEM audiovisual team, they created the platform, supervised attendee registrations, and obtained all necessary institutional approvals. Indirectly,



other departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities offered their support to the event—whether it was the Department of Practices, the Department of Tutoring, or the Vice-Rectorate for Research, among others. I am particularly grateful for the assistance of Miriam del Moral, Irene Vega, and María Quincoces. Externally to UNIR, we garnered logistical and financial support from two organizations associated with music therapy, both of which are known for their support in external practices of the master's program: the Professional Association of Music Therapy HDOSOL and Music and Therapy, along with the AULA DE MUSICOTERAPIA Center.

A month after the event, we commenced the dissemination campaign through social networks. Meanwhile, final touches were applied to the presentation script, and the event's style was honed with the input of music therapist Paola García. She took charge of conducting the proceedings. The presentations were reviewed, the design of the speakers' visuals was standardized, and the elements of the stage setup were finalized. All the components of this extensive puzzle were meticulously planned and coordinated, leveraging the calm and reflection afforded by having undertaken this organization well in advance. The tranquility persisted until a few days following the event, when UNIR's design department informed us that the visual branding used did not adhere to the university's style manual. As rules are rules, and because we greatly value flexibility and creativity, we promptly managed the necessary adjustments. They redesigned the imagery, and we subsequently re-launched the dissemination campaign across various online platforms. With sufficient lead time, we also proceeded to request the design of posters, promotional materials, and flyers, while the list of attendees continued to grow.

Arriving on June 30th, with the stage set and everything rehearsed, we inaugurated MUTtalks with the enthusiasm of a festive day, where the main focus was the reunion with friends and colleagues of the profession, as well as meeting the students and graduates of UNIR's Music Therapy Master's program who were able to attend. Ultimately, we welcomed 225 registered attendees both in-person and online, hailing from countries including Canada, USA, Panama, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Cuba, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and, of course, Spain. This impressive turnout already showcased the resonance and interest that MUTtalks had generated.

The event proceeded flawlessly, even surpassing our raised expectations. The stage lighting created an elegant and inviting ambiance, enveloping the room in a captivating atmosphere. The speakers adhered to their allotted times, and their messages captivated the au-

dience's interest. Everything unfolded as we had envisioned, validating the original objective that inspired the project.

The day's vibrancy was amplified by the new choir of UNIR's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, comprised of personnel from diverse areas of the university. For the closing, we were honored to have the presence of UNIR's Vice Chancellor for Cultural Affairs, Maria Teresa Santamaría, along with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Victor Padilla, and the Director of the Music Department, Ernesto Monsalve. Their participation significantly bolstered the institution's support for this project, which undoubtedly has been conceived with a lasting vision.

Both internal and external evaluations concurred, affirming the positive sentiments shared by all who graced the stage. The concept, proposal, staging, themes, presentation dynamics, musical contributions, and the opportunity to connect and strengthen ties were all highly regarded.

As the event drew to a close, our task was far from complete. All speakers are currently engaged in crafting publications that will be released in the upcoming months. These extended versions of the presentations will serve as comprehensive guides for aspiring music therapists. Simultaneously, we are already immersed in preparations for the next installment. Our objective is to harness our strengths and incorporate fresh resources to engage a wider audience. Innovation remains at the core of our mission. The initial format has successfully withstood rigorous testing, and in the subsequent event, we intend to delve into new topics and approaches, amplifying motivation and fostering professional entrepreneurship to further expand job opportunities within the sector.

As I often convey to new students, the Music Therapy Master's program marks the commencement of a journey—a crucial initial step. Upon completion, one should reflect on the experience and gear up for the next phase. It involves defining professional identity and honing therapeutic skills through ongoing training, supervision, and clinical practice. The HDOSOL START program, Music and Therapy, provides invaluable guidance for this process. Designed to mentor emerging professionals, the program facilitates the initiation of their therapeutic careers through Self-Experience sessions, technical guidance, and clinical supervision. This journey towards delivering quality services is a product of comprehensive training and a well-structured methodological strategy. A supportive approach towards labor entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role.

At MUTtalks, we unite with individuals and institutions that have tirelessly worked to establish music therapy as a recognized profession in Spain. We've laid out a methodology and will persist in our efforts to bridge the divide. Our aim is to inspire novel pathways for careers and contribute to transforming music-focused therapy into a tangible reality, centered on therapeutic benefits.

You can access the playlist of the day via the following YOUTUBE link. If you missed the first event, we eagerly anticipate your participation in the spring of 2024, where you can explore all that the second MUTtalks has to offer.

Gamella, D. J. (2023). MUTtalks: first day first day of entrepreneurship for music therapists. *Revista Misostenido*, 5(1). 143-146. 10.59028/misostenido.2023.24