



Healing Muses NOTES

www.healingmuses.org

February 2011

Muse Diana Rowan writes from Sophia, Bulgaria



It was hearing Bulgarian singing accompanied by harp that opened my ears to

the power of harp (I'd previously been a pianist), and fortune has brought me full circle. A wonderful opportunity to work on a PhD at the National Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria, presented itself and I've been working on my dissertation on harp compositional techniques since December. Of course, the Bay Area is where my heart is, so I'll be shuttling back and forth a great deal, and continuing my Healing Muses work, happily.

One of the most striking aspects of being here in Sofia is how moved everyday concert audiences are by the harp. In the Bay Area we are lucky enough to have tremendous access to so many kinds of music and instruments that sometimes we might take them for granted. Here, where a schoolteacher earns around \$400/month, harps are hard to come by, lessons even more so. It has been such a delight sharing the harp with people here, and their rapt attention and thoughtful

comments afterwards remind me that bringing harp to hospitals is a very similar act. In the hospital, the world of course narrows for the patients and their families, and I am grateful for the chance to bring in a breath of fresh air.
~Diana Rowan



Above: St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sophia

Please visit our website to view the video segment featuring music by Maureen and Eileen and nature photos by Eileen's daughter Melia Tichenor, with animation by Doug Thompson. Click on "What we do" and you will be able to access it with Quicktime Player.

January 23rd Fun, Fund-raising and Educational Event a Success

In the afternoon of a balmy January 23rd our second annual event was held in Albany in which three of the Muses (Maureen Brennan, Patrice Haan and Eileen Hadidian) played two mini-concerts, and told some stories of their experiences in hospital wards with patients and staff. Upwards of 50 attended. Lloyd Hryciw filmed the concerts. In-between the mini-concerts the audience browsed through thousands of used CDs, bought Healing Muses CDs, raffle tickets, enjoyed beverages and hors d'oeuvres, and met the Muses and eight of the Board members. Two of our local musical organizations had generously donated concert tickets as raffle prizes (SF Early Music Society and the Berkeley Symphony), and two local health practitioners donated gift certificates for their services. Raffle prizes included two bottles of fine wine and gift baskets assembled from Trader Joe's donated food and beverage items.

We thank everyone who donated, attended or bought advance raffle tickets (three of whom won raffle prizes "in absentia"). The funds raised will help Healing Muses expand their services in 2011 to offerings at both the Berkeley Primary Care Clinic and Regional Cancer Center in San Pablo. (A summary of the 2010 services provided by Healing Muses is reported on page 3).
~Suzanne Siebert



Above: Muses Brennan, Haan and Hadidian playing at the January 23rd event

Healing With Music

by Eileen Hadidian

For centuries people have written of music's power to aid in healing the body and soul. More recently studies have established impressive data showing the effects of music in various medical situations, in alleviating conditions from anxiety to chronic pain to post-operative side effects.

As a musician, my experience with cancer, combined with my natural curiosity, has led to some exciting projects involving music and healing. I read a lot about how music can be used to help people with life-threatening illness, by promoting relaxation, helping ease some of the pain and discomfort, and reducing anxiety during stressful hospital stays and procedures. It seemed like an important new direction to be moving in, and one that was closer to what music was originally intended for - as a healing tool used in many cultures by priests, healers and shamans.

Healing is different from curing; curing refers to the medical interventions which treat a disease and try to eliminate the symptoms, whereas healing comes from within the individual and has to do with a sense of balance and wholeness, an integration of body, mind and spirit, a space from which even death can be more readily accepted.



Characteristics of Healing Music

Healing music takes the musician off the stage, off the pedestal; it is not about "performing" music or showing off technical expertise. One becomes a channel or vessel - the music comes through you and is offered to the sick person and their family.

Music can be either stimulative or sedative. Stimulative music has an assertive rhythm that elicits reactions: hand clapping, toe tapping, dancing. In working with patients who are recovering from a major medical trauma, music with a pronounced rhythm is usually preferred. It stimulates the heart rate, increases metabolism, pulse, blood pressure, and muscular energy, and may provide exactly the energy some people need to build better health. Wind instruments, because of their connection to the breath, can also help stimulate and strengthen the processes that keep life going.

In contrast, sedative music is slower and more soothing. It has an easy, flowing melody, a slow tempo, with no major changes in pitch, dynamics and rhythm. It calms and eases anxiety, even when the listener is unconscious. Sedative music also reduces levels of stress hormones, such as adrenaline. When tapes of sedative music were used in hospital surgical units, patients reported decreased pre- and post-operative anxiety and pain, and they required less anesthesia. Stringed instruments like harp and guitar, because of their resonances and long sustain, are often chosen to soothe and entrance anxious or suffering patients.

How Music is Used in Medical Settings

Music can be used in several medical contexts. Music therapy is a behavioral science: it uses music to engage and support life processes. It involves interaction, participation and response from the client either through music-making or through active listening. It is often used to good effect with stroke patients as part of their rehabilitation, and with Alzheimer's patients as well.

Music for relaxation on the other hand doesn't involve

active interaction on the part of the patient, and acts as more a sedative. Even though there is rarely verbal engagement, the interaction of attention and intention is profound as the musician chooses music that is right for the patient. The patient listens to the music and uses it to relax on a very deep level.

Music for transition is a contemplative practice that addresses the needs of the dying. The music is individualized to meet the patient's needs. Like music for relaxation, it is non-invasive; it is received by the patient and makes no demands of her. It can help reduce pain, dissolve fear, and enable the patient to let go. To help this process, musicians play an instrument by the bedside - often a harp or guitar.

Entrainment

In offering healing music, the ultimate goal is entrainment, a process intended to synchronize the patient's vital signs with the music. When we play for a patient who is very agitated, starting with slow music in an effort to calm them may not work. We begin with a piece whose rhythm matches the patient's energy, then after a few minutes slow it down gradually, observing the patient's breathing slow down and vital signs stabilize. Conversely, if a patient needs to be stimulated, we start off with music that is slow and matches their mood, then gradually speed it up, so their vital signs have time to adjust to the new rhythm.

Each person receives the music differently, and on a variety of levels: physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Studies show it can lower blood pressure and respiration rates and it increases endorphin production, which reduces pain. Most patients drift off into a deep sleep, finding relief that even the morphine drip sometimes cannot guarantee. Hospice patients report that music also decreases their anxiety, anger and fear, and helps them accept their impending death.

Much of the repertoire of music for relaxation and transition comes from the medieval chant repertoire, with its modal melodies and free rhythm. Modal scales don't have a sense of drive and direction like major/minor scales, and are therefore more calming. Improvisation and toning are increasingly used at the bedside to reduce stress and invoke a space free from expectation and stress.

Music seems to be a healing tool in three major areas: It improves quality of life for people with serious illnesses, or those undergoing surgery or medical procedures such as chemotherapy or radiation, by focusing away from the discomfort and pain. It can lower blood pressure, basal metabolism and respiration rates, and it increases production of endorphins, which reduce pain.

Music can tap into the emotional centers and create brain waves that aid in moving past anxiety and fear into a more relaxed state of being, and therefore create an environment more conducive to healing.

And finally, music, through its harmonizing with a deeper experience, can facilitate spiritual healing at the soul level: it can help alleviate pain, dissolve fear, and help with the dying process and transition out of this life.

Whereas music is no cure-all, research shows that this natural therapy has a remarkable variety of healing benefits. Hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and a variety of health care professionals are beginning to use music, both recorded and live, as a regular part of their programs and treatments.

Afternoon with a Muse

I take the elevator to the 3rd floor of the hospital and set up my harp, having greeted the security guard, the ladies who volunteer at the information desk, the janitor, the floor manager and nurses, the accountant whose office is next to my spot, a passing doctor and a social worker who plans to learn to play the harp.

I tune and begin a quiet melody about a beautiful manor house in Scotland. Once I walked for several weeks in Scotland and I remember the green of the trees, hills with the blush of heather just coming on, a silver-blue sky and the golden honey light of afternoon. Another tune creeps up; I'm sitting on the porch of a wooden lodge overlooking a small lake set amid fir trees, ospreys diving for dinner.

A woman approaches me, faced suffused with tears: "My mother has just died there down the hall. I think she could hear the harp. Your music means so much to me; thank you. It's a comfort."

A few days later, another 3rd floor, this time an ICU ward. A physical therapist helps her client rise from his corner bed: "Walk as far as the harp." When the man gets to me, he asks: "Do you know 'The Bard of Armagh'?" The harp shifts from the halls of a San Francisco hospital to old Ireland.

A nurse says: "Mr. X is paralyzed. Won't you come and play by his room to give him something to distract him? And for me, I am so tired and the harp makes me feel relaxed."

I play a series of Irish and contemporary waltzes, very quietly. A pulmonary doc sits down at the desk next to me to write his charts. "I know what I'm doing", he says. "I need to focus while I do this. It's been a rough day on the ward." When I pack up, he does too.

Mr. X blinks farewell when the nurse tells him I am leaving. She says: "Come back tomorrow. We'll be here."

Who will be touched today? I don't know; I just know that if I show up something might happen. I've decided that my job is to carry the harp and then let it speak.

-Patrice Haan

*Proceeds from the sale of 20
Healing Muses CDs provide two
hours of healing music in a clinic,
hospice or hospital.*

Summary of Healing Muses Services in 2010 & Fundraising Progress

Healing Muses is a 501(c)(3) local non-profit group founded 11 years ago, which serves patients, caregivers and health caregivers by providing healing music in Bay Area hospitals, clinics, hospices, convalescent homes and other institutions providing care for the sick, handicapped and elderly. In 2010, our Muses provided 97 services:

Kaiser Walnut Creek: 24 services

Kaiser San Francisco: 48 services

Kaiser Antioch: 6 services

Kaiser Richmond: 3 services rotating
between in-patient floor and lobby
Kaiser Oakland: 4 services in Radiation
& Oncology

Berkeley Primary Care Clinic:
7 services

Regional Cancer Center,
Doctors' Hospital: 5 services.

In addition, our Muses provided 4 services at a special conference, "Caritas", sponsored by Kaiser Antioch which focused on heart-centered patient care.

Healing Muses' fundraising goal for 2011 is \$10,000. We are almost 80% towards that goal. These funds will be used to ensure that our work will carry on well into the future: continuing outreach into underserved communities (ie, the Berkeley Primary Care Clinic and Regional Cancer Center in San Pablo), forging new community partnerships, promoting CD sales, updating our website, and increasing board and volunteer involvement to build organizational capacity and sustainability.



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Healing Muses is a non-profit organization that brings soothing music, played on Celtic harp and wooden flutes, to Bay Area medical centers. Founder Eileen Hadidian's work with healing music grew out of her own cancer experience. She used music for her own healing, and began to play for other cancer patients, exploring ways in which music can be used to soothe critically and chronically ill people.

The professional musicians of Healing Muses draw on a diverse range of music from classical, folk and various world traditions to create a peaceful sound environment conducive to the well-being of patients and staff. Their extensive experience allows them to provide music as a healing tool to promote relaxation, diffuse pain, and reduce stress during hospital stays and procedures.

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Newest CD: Garden of Healing—music of the Celtic, American & World Traditions

The focus is on beautiful melodies that touch the heart. The purpose of this music is to relax mind and body; it is comforting, easy on the ear, and restful for the brain. Sales of the CDs provide funds to continue bringing live music to hospitals and clinics.



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