

just what the doctor ordered: 'sound health' prescribes music for a medical setting

Mary Perkinson

During the summer of 2009, a family member underwent a major surgical operation at the Cleveland Clinic. While taking a break from the hospital room where we spent many long hours post-surgery, my partner and I took a walk toward the main hospital atrium. While walking down a long corridor, I heard music and initially thought it was a recording or part of an art installation. But as we approached the atrium, the music became louder and clearer. When we arrived, we joined a group of patients, family members, doctors, nurses and staff gathered to enjoy the beautiful and serene music of a harpist. During this powerfully intimate experience, I realized the awe and calm that live music can create at key moments in people's lives. I knew I wanted to give to others what I had experienced that day.

Through investigation and informative discussions, I learned how the Cleveland Clinic operates in partnership with the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM) to provide live musical experiences for clinic audiences. CIM students perform one volunteer service followed by two services for which they are paid an honorarium. The program depends on written surveys to assess the impact of the performances and shape its future direction.

On any given day, 7,000 patients, visitors and staff come to UW Hospital from all regions of Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The benefits of live music for patients and visitors are well documented and include diminished levels of anxiety, stress and depression as well as reduced blood pressure. As a doctoral student in violin performance at the School of Music, I saw the potential benefits of a music outreach program for the musicians themselves.

All of these factors motivated me to start a program that could benefit both the hospital community and the community of musicians at the School of Music. These connections are reflected by its mission:

The mission of Sound Health is to enrich the UW Hospital environment for patients, families, health care providers and staff through live music while providing music students with an opportunity for community service and professional performing experience.

In November 2009, I was fortunate to receive an award from UW-Madison Arts Enterprise's Arts Venture Challenge for my proposal for Sound Health. The award of \$500 helped initiate

the pilot program on February 5, 2010. During that initial semester, there were 18 performances by 30 musicians. As evidenced by the surveys and verbal feedback, the pilot program of Sound Health was an overwhelming success. Patients, visitors, staff and musicians unanimously expressed their desire for Sound Health to continue.

In July 2010, Sound Health was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Ira and Ineva Reilly Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment and a matching grant from the UW Hospital. The total of \$10,000 will sustain Sound Health through the ensuing three years by supporting 90 performances by a variety of ensembles, half of which are volunteer, and supporting a student hourly employee for two years. I will continue to apply for grants and awards, either as an individual or under the auspices of the UW Hospital or School of Music.

Sound Health is about enriching the community for patients, visitors, staff and musicians, and about helping to create an environment of care. With the support of the Ira and Ineva Reilly Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment, the UW Hospital, the UW-Madison Arts Enterprise, and the School of Music, Sound Health continues to enhance

the UW Hospital environment, support the development of music students as contributors to the community and serve as a model program statewide.

To learn more about Sound Health or to make a donation, contact Mary Perkinson at soundhealth@music.wisc.edu, or visit www.music.wisc.edu/soundhealth

Mary Perkinson received the D.M.A. degree in violin performance in 2011. She received the Arts Institute's David and Edith Sinaiko Frank Graduate Fellowship for a Woman in the Arts in the spring of 2011 to support "Sound Health Performances and Reflections," an end-of-year program that celebrated the impact of Sound Health through showcase performances by more than 20 musicians and reflections by musicians, patients, staff and visitors.

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PHOTO: Katrin Talbot

