

## Full-Length Article

**Relationship Completion in Palliative Care Music Therapy: Clinical Case Example-Part 1**Amy Clements-Cortés<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>University of Toronto, Faculty of Music; Ryerson Chang School, Toronto, Canada**Abstract**

The following case study represents an example of music therapy research in palliative care with a focus on relationship completion. This case of 'Bill', presents one of four participant's experience included in the research study on relationship completion in palliative care. The account of Bill's case study are presented in Part II of this paper.<sup>(1)</sup> Bill received 30 individual music therapy sessions provided at three levels of practice.<sup>(2)</sup> The music therapy techniques utilized included: song choice; lyric discussion and analysis; songwriting, singing and playing pre-composed songs; life review; and song dedication. Bill's wife (a study co-participant) also joined in the music therapy sessions towards the end of the process.

**Keywords:** *relationship completion, palliative care, songwriting, grieving, love*multilingual abstract | [mmd.iammonline.com](http://mmd.iammonline.com)**Introduction**

The following case study presents Bill, a 91 year old male dying of lung cancer. Bill participated in 30 individual music therapy sessions implemented at three levels of practice [2]. A number of direct quotes are included in this case presentation<sup>1</sup> and were taken from the transcription of the music therapy sessions and interviews.

**Bill**

Bill was a 91 year old male diagnosed with lung cancer. He was born in a small farming community, by parents who immigrated to Canada from Lithuania to escape persecution. As Jewish persons they were not allowed to own land in Lithuania, and that prompted Bill's parents to move to Canada to build a new life. His father Maury became a wholesale grocer and his mother Rosa took care of Bill and his three siblings.

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International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM).

<sup>1</sup> **A note on quotes:**

Bill's direct words from sessions and the interview.

"My words to Bill in our sessions."

S: "Sarah's (Bill's wife) words in our sessions."

Bill studied law at the University of Toronto and opened a law office in the late 1940s. He shared this office with two other lawyers.

*When she died I was lost but I knew I wanted to live. I was retired and lonely. About two years after she died, I met another wonderful woman, Sarah, and she became my wife.*

Five years prior to our sessions, Bill received his cancer diagnosis. He underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatments, and his cancer went into remission, but returned three years later. Bill also developed other health complications. He suffered a heart attack, was diagnosed with arteriosclerosis, and was in and out of acute care hospitals. When Bill was admitted to the palliative care unit his prognosis was three to six months.

*They told me I could try another round of treatment, but I don't want to anymore. I am tired and I have my memoirs to finish now before I die. I don't want to feel sick from the medications anymore.*

**MUSIC THERAPY SESSIONS**

When Bill entered palliative care he spoke to the social worker about his love of music and drama, and also about his memoir writing project he had been working on for the last two years. The social worker spoke to Bill about the possibility of participating in music therapy and Bill expressed an interest in taking part. The social worker thought Bill would enjoy participating in music-centered interventions and referred him to music therapy to enhance his quality of life.

**Assessment, Week 1 (Sessions 1 & 2)**

The first two sessions consisted of: gathering background information about Bill; discussing current issues and problems related to Bill's illness and hospitalization; dialoguing about

the potential role(s) and goals of music therapy sessions; discussing music; discussing his memoirs; and me playing piano and guitar, and singing some of these musical selections.

#### Bill's memoirs.

*I have been working on this project for the last two years. I don't have as much energy as I did before, but I need to finish them. Would you like to hear some of the stories?*

“My goodness, that is a large binder of notes that you have.”

*When I can't sleep I write down my thoughts and then later I write the thoughts into stories. I spend every morning now writing the stories.*

Bill let me look at the binder and he also showed me a book that he had written about ten years prior.

*Music has been a large part of my life. I used to love to go dancing. I love some of the old songs, and some of the movie songs. You know I loved drama too all my life. I always wanted to be an actor instead of a lawyer.*

I asked Bill which song he would like me to sing. He choose *I Want A Girl*. After I sang the song Bill asked to hear a few others. This facilitated a discussion about his current situation and two marriages.

#### Rebecca and Sarah.

*I was so lucky to remarry Sarah. We have had such fun these last years. After Rebecca died (Bill's first wife) I began to write poetry and stories about our life together. I found that this helped me come to grips with what had happened and it was a way to talk about it. I have been so blessed in my life to have known such a gentle and courageous woman. I am doubly blessed however as I have been fortunate to meet another amazing woman. I met Sarah at a lunch and learn series. I courted her for less than two months before I proposed marriage to her. I worry now about Sarah and Bette. (Sarah's daughter) She lost her son a few months ago. Sarah is still so upset about the death of her grandchild. We all are.*

“Has anyone helped your family to process and grieve that death?”

*Sarah refuses to go for counseling and so does Bette. They say they can handle it fine together.*

“What exactly are you worried about with respect to Sarah?”

*I am worried that when I die she will not have anyone to help her. I know I am not much help, but she has just lost her grandson and now she will lose me. It will be very hard for her.*

“Have you thought about having to say goodbye to Sarah?”

*I'm not very good with goodbyes. I don't think I'll say goodbye. It seems so final.*

I introduced the research study to Bill during session two as we continued to discuss his relationships with Rebecca and Sarah. He indicated that he was intrigued by the study and agreed to participate. I asked Bill to think about it until our next session but he wanted to sign the consent form that day.

*Maybe you can help me write some of the stories from my memoirs into a play.*

“That sounds like a neat idea. What would you think about adding songs to the play?”

*How do you mean?*

“Well, we could use songs that are meaningful to you and that speak to the stories to include in the play, or we could even write some ourselves.”

*Write songs? I've never written a song. I guess you have.*

“Actually Bill, it is not that hard to write songs. We can try together if you like.”

*Why not? It will make the play better I think.*

“Maybe can we begin by looking at the stories in your memoirs and selecting the ones that you would like to include in the play?”

At the end of session two Bill and I established the goals for music therapy sessions. These were:

- (1) For Bill to write stories for the play based on his memoirs.
- (2) For Bill to select pre-composed songs and write songs to include in the play.
- (3) For Bill to complete his relationship with Sarah.
- (4) For Bill to complete his relationship with Rebecca.

On average, sessions took place two times per week for 60-70 minutes each, for a total of 30 sessions.

**My reflection on the assessment phase.** In the assessment sessions Bill told me many stories about his life growing up, his career, his marriages, and his children. Each story was extremely fascinating. He had led such an interesting life

which included varied and diverse experiences such as traveling, and participation in political, religious, educational, and performing arts groups. From Bill's discussions regarding his illness it appeared that he was accepting of the diagnosis but still had healthy expressions of hope regarding the possibility that his doctors did not necessarily know everything about its trajectory.

Bill acknowledged that music had been a large part of his life but that he was not a musician. The book that he wrote and shared with me included musical reflections and stories that were important to him. When his first wife died, Bill was drawn to poetry to help him express his thoughts and feelings surrounding her death. He expressed his gratitude and good fortune in finding love again with his second wife, Sarah. Bill expressed an urgent need to complete his memoirs before he died. With this goal of writing his memoirs Bill identified that I could help him in using his life's stories to create a play. When I proposed the idea of including music in the play, Bill stated that music would make the play better and he was willing to try to include music in this project.

Bill's family was still grieving the loss of Sarah's grandson and Bill expressed concern over how Sarah and Bette would cope with his death. He recognized that while he may not have played an instrumental part in helping them process and grieve that death, he understood that he was a support to Sarah and when he died he felt that she would be alone. The concerns that Bill expressed are what prompted me to introduce the research study to him. I thought perhaps he might like some assistance in completing his relationship with Sarah, and discussing his death with her.

As we spoke and Bill learned about the potential of music therapy sessions he openly embraced participating in the music therapy research study. Bill appeared to be a man who had been receptive to trying new things throughout his life and he continued to desire growth and learning in his last days. As I discussed the music therapy study with Bill we spoke about the potential of helping him say goodbye to Sarah. We also spoke of the possibility of including Sarah in some of our sessions to help her in saying goodbye to Bill, as well as to discuss her grieving process. Bill expressed enthusiasm about engaging in the study and music therapy process, and said he would speak to Sarah about her impending participation.

### **“Focusing,” Supportive Music Therapy, Week 2 (Sessions 3 & 4)**

During this time as defined by Dileo and Dneaster's [2] model of music therapy in palliative care, music was implemented at the supportive level. There was no set structure for these two sessions, other than a closing song. Music therapy techniques included: song choice; lyric discussion and analysis; singing and playing pre-composed music; and life review.

### **What are the stories that Bill needs to tell?**

*I've been thinking and working hard since you last came. I was looking through my book and my writings and I have tried to pick some stories for the play, but I have not decided on them all. Where should we start?*

“I did read your book Bill, and your life has about 20 plays that we could write. You have so many wonderful stories. Perhaps we could start with you selecting which stories are the most important to you?”

*They are all important, that is the problem I am having.*

“What if we pick a period of your life and write the play about that time? What do you think of that idea? Is there a period of your life that we could focus on?”

*Perhaps, that is a good idea.*

“What is most important for you to express in the play?”

*Perhaps these last years. My book only has some of those stories so there are some that still need to be told.*

*How about we look at these past 10 years? That time began when Rebecca died.*

As Bill decided on the period of time that the play would focus on, we came to the decision to begin the play with the story of Rebecca's death and funeral. During these two sessions we also selected the important stories from the past 10 years that we would build the play around. Bill and I decided that he would work on writing some of the stories between our sessions and that he would present them to me as they developed. In session four we began with the first story.

### **What is the music that can augment the telling of those stories?**

“So we are starting the play with the death of Rebecca. Can you tell me some of that story?”

*Rebecca was a woman who lit up the lives of so many people. She was intelligent and dignified and she had an extraordinary ability to make friends. She was a LADY!*

“How did you deal with her death?”

*I wrote poetry to help me. I had a hard time. She was my life companion, my friend.*

“Should we include a song in tribute to Rebecca? Did you have a special song together for example? We could also write a song about the story of her death. I saw in your book that you wrote a few reflections about her death.”

*I think a dramatic song could open the play.*

*It should be about my thoughts of losing her and having to live life without her love.*

Between session three to five Bill wrote the play dialogue to go along with this song. We began writing the song in session five. Bill also created a list of all the important people from the stories he would include in the play. These people became the characters in the play.

In sessions three and four we also looked at some of the songs that Bill had mentioned in his book and I asked Bill to think of other important or special songs that we might include. Bill identified several pieces as we looked through his book together and I played a few of these for him. We discussed the lyrics of those songs and Bill said he wanted to think more about the songs before making any decisions. He stated that in future sessions he wanted to continue listening to and discussing music that we could include to augment the play's stories.

Bill told me that he spoke to Sarah about music therapy and the possibility of involving her in some of our sessions. She was supportive and encouraged Bill to engage in music therapy. We decided to begin our music therapy process by working on the play and Bill would invite Sarah to come to our sessions when we had made some "definitive progress."

**My reflection on the "Focusing" phase.** In these two sessions Bill was able to create an outline for the play. He identified the important stories that he needed to include. It was an important initial step that Bill decided on the period of his life that the play would encompass. Bill's life was overflowing with stories which were all important, but it was not possible given the time we had to write and include all of these stories.

At this time we began selecting some of the stories that would be augmented with music. Bill selected important and special songs and I played some of these for Bill. We discussed these songs and their lyrics. Doing this groundwork set up the transition to our next phase of music therapy sessions. Bill seemed comfortable sharing his stories with me and he was open to selecting music to accompany his stories. As Bill's ultimate goal was to write his memoirs, it seemed appropriate that we began our music therapy process together by writing the accompanying play. It seemed logical to me that by engaging in this process the important stories at this time in Bill's life would surface. These stories encompassed relationships that were central to Bill's life. I thought that by Bill writing the play dialogue and selecting and writing songs to accompany the stories, any issues and expressions to complete these relationships would be expressed. If and when that happened we would engage in discussion about those relationships and about the work and expressions associated with relationship completion.

Bill was goal driven. He wanted to make progress writing his play before inviting Sarah to our sessions. Bill was focused on his memoirs and the play project and it seemed

appropriate that he needed to work on this first before Sarah would be part of our process.

### **"Launching," Communicative/Expressive Music Therapy<sup>(2)</sup>, Weeks 3-9 (Sessions 5-16)**

There was no set structure for sessions, other than the closing song which was introduced during "Focusing." Each of the sessions during "Launching" involved Bill sharing and discussing the stories and dialogue he had written for the play as well as listening and discussing the music that would accompany those stories. We also began writing the song for Rebecca and the love song for Sarah. Music therapy techniques included: song choice; lyric analysis and discussion; singing and playing pre-composed music; songwriting; and life review.

The following excerpts are some of the things that we discussed surrounding the identified stories for the play.

#### **Courting of Sarah.**

*This story is a tale of grief, redemption, defeat, and triumph.*

#### **Marriage to Sarah.**

*When we met with the Rabbi about our wedding he instructed us to write letters to each other. We gave them to him and read them to each other in our next meeting with him.*


#### **The honeymoon.**

*We went to the American Colony Club and stopped at an Arab bazaar.*

*We went to Yad Vashem, the memorial to the six million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust. The immediacy of that experience ripped my heart. There was silence between Sarah and I.*

#### **Bill and Sarah's first wedding anniversary.**

*I tried to write a poem that we could use for our song for Sarah.*

[Click to hear audio] 

#### ***The Love I Feel for You Sarah.***

*Tell me Sarah, say it's love,  
Why dost thou do me favour?  
I am unworthy of thy grace.  
The gracious smile upon thy face,  
My very soul doth savour.*

*I watch thee bathed in morning sun;  
I seek the night's sweet holding.  
Yes, thou has saved this solemn soul,  
And caused me to perform a role,  
That keeps our world unfolding.*

*So, at this first anniversary  
I celebrate my love for thee,  
I say to thee on bended knee,  
It is a lasting certainty.  
I will love you always!*

“That is so beautiful Bill. Shall we try to set these words to music?”

#### **Joseph’s death.**

*We went to visit Joseph in Israel about a year after we were married. He was not well.  
He underwent a kidney transplant and died three days later.  
He was only 24 and had suffered for much of his life.  
But Sarah tells me he really lived with courage, patience, and humour.*

#### **Sarah’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

*On Sarah’s birthday we had a large party with her family and friends. I wrote her a letter that I read out.  
It was a milestone birthday. We prayed that Sarah would reach other milestones, 80, 85, and so on. I hope she does because I don’t think I will reach anymore of my milestones.*

“Do you remember that we talked about inviting Sarah to some of our sessions to learn of the progress of your play? When she comes you could read what you have written for her and we could talk about it.

*Yes, we could try to do that.*

“Perhaps there is some music that can accompany this writing and our sessions with Sarah? What are the sentiments you want to express to Sarah?”

*I want to tell her that I love her, and that she must keep living the years she has.*

*I want to thank her for our marriage and for her role in bringing me out of my sorrow over the death of Rebecca.*

**My reflection on the “Launching” phase.** During this period Bill spent time between our sessions writing stories for the play. We discussed them in our sessions and also began selecting music for them. The ending stories for the play had yet to be decided. As we discussed these stories Bill came to the assessment that there were sentiments that he wanted to express to Sarah and that he could do this through songwriting. He had been hesitant to discuss his death with her, but he was willing to discuss his death in future sessions with her through the use of the songs that he was writing to express his feelings of love and gratitude to Sarah. He thought speaking with her about his death would help her once he died.

Bill clearly identified the sentiments he wanted to express in the play and to Sarah. He accessed those emotions easily and discussed them. Song choice and lyric analysis facilitated further awareness and expression of those emotions. Songwriting was becoming the tool to express those key emotions and sentiments to Rebecca and Sarah, and song choice and subsequent song selection for the play were providing the pathway to express emotions that were held in his stories.

Bill worked very hard during this period and his health remained stable which facilitated his ability to write and engage in our sessions. He was making steady and rapid progress on his own in completing his memoirs, and was also progressing quickly in writing the dialogue for the play. Bill left me voice messages in between our sessions reminding me to work on songs, and to think about the stories. He also updated me on his progress in those messages. He was very committed to his play project. Writing gave Bill a purpose and contributed to his self-concept. It diverted his attention away from his illness. Once Bill had identified the sentiments that he wanted to express to Sarah we transitioned to the “Transformative” phase of our sessions.

#### **“Vehicles/Tools,” Transformative Music Therapy <sup>(2)</sup>, Weeks 10-14 (Sessions 17-26)**

During weeks 10 to 14, music therapy was offered at the transformative level. Again there was no set structure for music therapy sessions, other than the use of the closing song. Music therapy techniques included: singing and playing pre-composed music; song choice; lyric analysis and discussion; songwriting; life review; and song dedication.

#### **The play outline for “Heroes”**

##### *Prologue*

*Act 1 Rebecca’s Song (Original Composition)*

*Act 2 Courting of Sarah (It Had to Be You)*

*Act 3 Marriage to Sarah (Tumbalkaika)*

*Act 4 The Honeymoon (Que Sera, Sera)*

*Act 5 Joseph’s Death (The Rose)*

*Act 6 Bill and Sarah’s First Wedding Anniversary (Original Composition)*

*Act 7 Sarah’s 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday (Original Composition)*

*Act 8 To Be Determined.*

We worked to select pre-composed songs and write a number of original songs to accompany the stories and dialogue. Two highlights about songwriting are presented below.

#### **Songwriting**

##### ***Death and funeral of Rebecca.***

*You know I am having a hard time with this song. It has to have a different tone than the other songs in the play.*

*It should be more operatic I think.*

I played some examples of melodies and heavy block chords in the key of G minor that I thought would reflect the need for the music to sound serious and sad. I introduced the idea of recitative and aria to Bill and we tried out several possible melodies. Bill and I spent session 21 trying out different melodies and accompaniment patterns until one was just right. Please see **Appendix A** for the lyrics to Rebecca's song.

#### Sarah's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday (Original composition).

*I think we should write the song based on this poem that I wrote.*

*I need to change some of the lyrics.*

What is it about the lyrics that don't seem right to you?"

*I'm not sure if it says everything yet that I want to say.*

"Do you have a list of the things you want to say?"

*When I wrote the dialogue for this act of the play, I thought about Sarah's party where I gave my speech and recited a poem that I wrote at the time. I took most of the ideas for this poem from that speech, what I could remember of it.*

"Let's look at the poem and underline all the things that you are expressing. For example in this sentence you say how happy you are to be able to celebrate Sarah's milestone with her."

As we engaged in this process it became clearer to Bill what sentiments were not as clearly written as he would like, and ultimately the sentiments he needed to include in the revision to the song lyrics.

*I have said that I am grateful to be married to Sarah, and grateful that she married me, but I have not thanked her for being her, for being the friend and love that she is.*

"Would you like to try working expressions of thank you for Sarah being your friend and love into the song? You have expressed your love for Sarah in the love song you wrote for her, but you have not expressly said thank you as of yet in those songs, or in the dialogue that I have read."

*Yes, that is true. I say many things but never actually thank you.*

I played several melodies and simple chordal accompaniments and we wrote the music for the first stanza.

*Okay, now that we have that first bit done I am going to rewrite some of the lyrics before our next meeting, and we can finish the song then.*

We finished writing the song in session 23.

**Planning the sessions with Sarah.** Bill and I discussed what parts of the play he wanted to share with Sarah in our sessions with her. In our first session with Sarah he wanted to share the story of their first wedding anniversary and he asked me to sing *The Love I Feel for You Sarah* that we wrote to accompany that story. Bill decided that he wanted to introduce the play to Sarah by asking her to read her character's part from the play followed by me singing.

**Sessions with Bill and Sarah.** Sarah accepted Bill's invitation and came to session 24. I met Sarah previously on the palliative care unit when she was visiting Bill and I was going to have a session with another client. I thanked Sarah for coming and explained what Bill and I had been working towards these past weeks. I also spoke to her about the research study and asked her to think about participating if she was comfortable. Sarah told us that she thought more about the study when Bill asked her to come to that week's session and provided consent to participate.

#### Session 24, Bill and Sarah's first wedding anniversary.

Bill asked Sarah to read from the "First Wedding Anniversary" act from the play as planned. The following excerpt is dialogue of what arose after that reading.

S: "Well Bill, I see your writing is still up to your high standards. That is how I remember our anniversary also. You have told me some of the stories in your play, but you didn't tell me that you wrote about our anniversary."

*I wanted it to be a surprise.*

S: "It is very flattering. I am embarrassed with all this focus on me."

*Sarah, you know that I have always written poetry for you. Amy asked me if I wanted to write a song for you and we have.*

S: "A song for me?"

*Yes for you. Who else would it be for?*

I sang the song for Sarah and Bill. Sarah began crying. When the song was finished Bill said:

*Now Sarah, I didn't write the song to make you sad. Please don't cry about it.*

*You know I love you don't you? I wanted you to know this. It is so hard for me to tell you that sometimes in a serious way, but I want you to know this.*

S: "I do Bill and I love you too."

*Sarah, we were so lucky to find each other. You really helped give me a new spirit to live.*

*I am worried about you Sarah. I know you pretend that I am not dying.*

S: "You don't know that you are dying."

*Yes Sarah, I do. And, I don't want you to waste the time you have left after I die crying over it. I want you to find*

*things to give your life purpose and I want you to find people to support and help you. You know I am very worried about you and Bette.*

*If you have a lot of depression when I die, I want you to go to the counselor. Do you promise me? I want you to spend time with your friends and go to the Temple for companionship.*

S: *"I don't want to go."*

*Look Sarah. I don't want you to promise something that you don't want to do, but can you think about it more and consider it if it might help you.*

### Session 25, Story of Joseph's funeral.

"Sarah, I spoke to Bill the other day after our session because I wanted to find out what we were going to be discussing or presenting to you today. Bill has written the story of Joseph's Funeral into his play and I thought it might be a good idea to talk about Joseph's passing. Bill agreed to this. Is this alright with you?"

Sarah read her character's part, Bill read his, and I read the other characters' lines from this act in the play. Afterwards I sang *The Rose*. There was silence for a few minutes after we finished.

S: *"You know I am trying to get stronger for my daughter to help her with Joseph's death.*

*It just seems like a lot of people have died in these past few years since Bill and I were married, many friends and family members. I always thought I would die before Bill.*

*Sarah, I think this is my last fight.*

"Sarah, part of the reason that Bill chose the song he did for Joseph's story is that the flower symbolizes new life and hope. What do you think? Would you both like to sing it with me now?"

When Bill heard Sarah singing the song with me he also joined in. Together we sang the song and began to talk about Joseph and the lyrics.

S: *"A child is the hardest thing to lose and Bette has tried to be strong. I probably could have been stronger too but I felt numb."*

"When Bill was telling me about Joseph and his passing, he told me that Joseph was helpful to you when your first husband died."

S: *"Yes, he was. I think I just kept myself quite busy and I would look after Joseph and he was kind and loving, and so he helped me get over that death.*

*Sarah, it is very important to me that you keep going to Temple and involving yourself in the clubs and lectures. You have some friends there already and it will give you a chance to meet new friends.*

S: *"I just don't like to think about the day you die Bill."*

*It is going to be okay. I want to know that you will be looked after.*

Towards the end of that session I asked Bill and Sarah if they would like to sing *The Rose* again with me. They chose not to sing but wanted to hear it again. I also sang *The Love I Feel for You Sarah*.

### Session 26, Sarah's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

We began this session with a poem that Sarah brought with her.

S: *"I hope it is okay with you Amy. I brought a poem that Bill wrote for me on the anniversary of our first date."*

After Sarah read the poem, the couple laughed.

*I am a clown, through and through.*

S: *"You are romantic and funny."*

*Maybe now is a good time for another song.*

*I wrote a song to go with the story of your 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday.*

S: *"Really? You are full of surprises aren't you?"*

We read the dialogue from the act in the play about Sarah's 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday and then I sang the song for Sarah. The following dialogue surfaced after hearing the song.

*Sarah, do you remember the poem I wrote for you on that Birthday? I was so silly I misplaced that one, but I wrote this song from what I remembered of that poem. I knew there were a few things I need to say to you before I die and I didn't want to not find the time to say them.*

*Sarah, I made a list of these things and I put them in the song for you.*

*Thank you for taking me as your husband.*

*Thank you for all the nice things you always do, like bringing me your homemade cookies and food.*

*Thank you for being my friend and my wife.*

S: *"Thank you too Bill. You are a good husband. It is too bad that we do not have more time. Thank you for the gift of your writing and music. I feel very loved."*

I excused myself from the room at that point explaining that I thought they might like to have time alone, and our session ended there. It seemed that the couple would benefit that day from private time together now that they had expressed many emotions. Bill did not want to share the lyrics of this song titled *Gratitude* in the writing of his case study.

**My Reflection on the "Vehicles/Tools" Phase.** Bill worked very hard during the "Vehicles/Tools" phase. He completed acts one through seven of his play, and continued writing his memoirs. Bill decided to call the play "*Heroes*" to honour the two most important women in his life, Rebecca and Sarah. As he expressed, these were the most important relationships to him. Bill reflected carefully on choosing songs to accompany the stories in his play. As he stated:

*It is important that the song is the right fit.*

Through song choice, lyric analysis, and discussion Bill reflected on the meanings expressed in the songs we shared, and we discussed the emotions that arose from those ruminations. Bill also engaged in songwriting. He found writing the song *The Love I Feel for You Sarah* easier to write than *Rebecca's Song*, and his song *Gratitude*. Writing the song for Rebecca, which for him expressed his feelings of how he would live without her helped Bill in saying a final goodbye to her. Bill had grieved her death, but he wanted to honour her in the play and express the love he felt for her, as well as the loss of living life without her, expressing his love helped Bill close that chapter of his life and subsequently complete his relationship with Rebecca.

Writing the song *Gratitude* for Sarah enabled Bill to express his appreciation to Sarah for many things such as: being his wife; being his friend; and giving him a reason to engage in life again after the death of Rebecca. Writing this song also facilitated Bill's awareness of discussing his impending death with Sarah and articulating his wishes for her once he died. By expressing "I Love You," and "Thank You" to Sarah in the two songs he wrote for her, he was working towards completing his relationship with her. The final thing for Bill to do was to say "Goodbye" to Sarah.

Inviting Sarah to our sessions enabled Bill to verbally express his love to her both in the songs and in the discussions that ensued. Through the reading of the story of their anniversary and my singing of *The Love I Feel for You Sarah*, Bill was able to speak to her about his death and his desire for Sarah to continue to engage in life when he died. Reading the story of Joseph's death from the play and singing *The Rose* facilitated a discussion of grieving and the importance of seeking support to help a person grieve. These were important things for Bill to discuss with Sarah to help him reduce his anxiety over his death and Sarah's grieving process.

It assisted Bill in communicating to Sarah his desire for her to obtain support and help when he passed away, as well as his wish for her to find new things to put her energy towards.

### **"Dying" Supportive Music Therapy 2, Weeks 15 & 16 (Sessions 27-30)**

**Interviews.** I asked Bill and Sarah if it was okay to interview them during week 15 and they agreed. Bill's interview took place in session 27, and Sarah's interview took place later that day. I brought the interview transcript to Bill for verification in session 28.

**Bill's interview.** The following are excerpts of his interview.

*I really enjoyed our sessions together. They were exciting. We did so much work, and I am so happy with the play.*

*I think I liked songwriting the most. It was very creative, like poetry writing, but on a higher level.*

*I think many issues arose in our sessions. The most important was that of discussing my death with Sarah and talking about the death of Rebecca and Joseph. I also liked reminiscing about the trip Sarah and I took to Israel.*

*My relationship with Rebecca and Sarah are the most important ones to me.*

*Yes, music was helpful to me. I always have written and that has helped me tell my stories. Now there are stories and songs about my life.*

*I want you to bring the play to Sarah and sing the songs for her once I die. Will you do that for me?*

*Songwriting did help me express important feelings and issues with Sarah.*

**Sarah's interview.** The following are excerpts of her interview.

*S: "When you began working with Bill, his energy seemed to come back to him."*

*S: "I am so pleased that Bill wrote the play. He always wrote beautiful poems for me, and he loves drama."*

*S: "Bill really liked songwriting and he even kept my songs a secret. I didn't know he was writing them. They are so special to me."*

*S: "I think it was important for Bill to talk to me about his death. I am glad he did this. It was hard, but necessary."*

*S: "Music therapy did seem to help Bill and I talk about death and also it gave us a chance to reminisce a little bit."*

*S: "I am glad that I was involved in the sessions. It was a nice experience, one I never thought I would have here in a hospital. It is such a hard place to come to."*

I brought the transcript of Sarah's interview to her for verification in week 16.

**Last sessions.** As defined by Dileo and Dneaster (2005) our last sessions took place at the supportive level of practice [2]. Sessions involved singing and playing pre-composed songs that we had shared in previous sessions. Sarah was present at our last two sessions and she sang some of the songs with me at Bill's bedside.

In session 28 after Bill verified the interview transcription I sang a few songs to him for enjoyment and relaxation. Bill asked me to write the final act of the play for him. I decided to write a speech for Bill's character to deliver. Bill had told me that he had given many speeches throughout his life, both in his work and personal life so this seemed fitting as the final act for his play. Bill liked the idea, but was not able to verify it as I did not finish until the week he died. This speech has become the artistic piece (See Appendix B) that I wrote to reflect Bill's experience. Bill died the Monday following session 30.

### **Music Therapy Treatment Plan Analysis Summary**

The following music therapy techniques were utilized with Bill: song choice; lyric discussion and analysis; songwriting, singing and playing pre-composed songs; life review; and song dedication.

As defined by Dileo and Dneaster (2005) [2] music therapy with Bill and Sarah was implemented at the three levels of practice over the course of his sessions. Initially music therapy was introduced to Bill at the supportive level to help



Bill focus on selecting the stories that he would include in his play. Through song choice, lyric analysis and discussion, and playing and singing pre-composed songs, Bill began the process of identifying special and important songs in his life. By focusing on the time period for the play we were able to move to the communicative/expressive level of practice. In this phase Bill began writing the play dialogue and we continued to select songs to augment the stories. Music was providing a method in accessing the emotions that were held in his stories. This process initiated Bill's assessment that there were sentiments that he needed to express to Sarah, "I Love You," and "Thank You." Songwriting was becoming the chosen tool to share those emotions as Bill expressed his love in writing the lyrics for Sarah's song, *The Love I Feel for You Sarah*.

Once these two sentiments were identified we moved to the transformative phase of music therapy where music was used to help Bill complete his relationship with Rebecca by writing the song for her and discussing his grieving over her death. Writing *Rebecca's Song* and discussing grieving also facilitated Bill's awareness of the importance of speaking to Sarah about his death and her grieving process. Writing the song *Gratitude* for Sarah provided the tool for Bill to communicate his appreciation to Sarah.

Sarah joined the music therapy process at the end of the transformative phase. It was essential that Bill and I worked on the play and music before Sarah joined us in sessions. Bill's private sessions with me provided him with the space and tools to come to clear awareness of how to complete his relationship with Sarah which involved expressing love and gratitude to her. Bill and Sarah were able to complete their relationship through discussing the emotions and sentiments

that arose from reading the play and listening to the songs. Once love and gratitude were expressed Bill was able to speak to Sarah about his death, and to convey his wishes for her once he died.

When this was accomplished music therapy transitioned back to the supportive level as Bill's energy was decreasing and he was becoming weaker. Sarah and I sang at Bill's bedside during our last two sessions. While the sentiment of "Goodbye" was not expressly said by either in our music therapy process, Sarah accepted that Bill was dying and she spent as much time as possible with him the last two weeks of his life.

#### References

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#### Biographical Statements

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## APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL COMPOSITION

### Rebecca's song

*Recitative:*

*He did not know that she had died and in fact had deserted him.  
His eyes turned moist as he uttered a smothered prayer.  
His voice tearing at the sharp edge of his grief.  
She was the most beautiful, the most gracious, most eloquent woman,  
He has ever known.*

*Aria:*

*Come now gang, pick up the pieces,  
We are all given short term leases.  
Softly you're best to understand,  
Our lives are like quickened sand.  
But dear leader we reply,  
You make it seem like endless sky.  
That having lost a wife,  
To start again to live a new life.*

*Which satisfies our every need,  
So that wounds no longer bleed.  
Though a dear mate of many years has left us,  
We must still our tears.  
And start again, our lives renew.  
To we our daily tasks imbue.  
With spirits lightened day enhances.  
No good captain, not a chance!*

*Because you see we're like a tree.  
Its branches withered, sap run dry.  
The wine of joy, the ecstasy,  
No longer there, we oft times cry.  
So tell us leader, are we wrong?  
Pronouncing we can't sing your song.  
That we are hampered by bereavement.  
Why ask us to gestate achievement?*

*Free Recitative:*

*You've gone to almost every length,  
To help us and we admire your strength.  
You'd light our way back to the living,  
Renew our sense of time and giving.*

## APPENDIX B: ARTISTIC PIECE

### Cheers to Our Heroes

I want to leave my audience with some words of wisdom. I have been known throughout my life for being verbose, but I am going to leave my mark on this world by making this speech short and sweet.

*I am saddened by the absence of some members of my family as I face the last days of my life, yet I rejoice in the presence of others who have kept vigil at my side.*

*For Sarah, I wish that for everyday she has experienced sorrow, that she will now experience happiness.*

*For the rest of my family and friends I have a few words of wisdom I would like to impart:*

*Remember,*

*Drink the wine of life slowly and with joy.*

*Be slow to anger and quick to forgive indiscretions.*

*Remember you have no monopoly on truth.*

*your friends.*

*Join with Sarah to celebrate life.*

*Devote the years left to the enrichment of the day of the other.*

*Accept with grace and courage, pain, loss, and disappointment.*

*Remember that each day is the beginning of the rest of your lives.*

*So, in these words I say goodbye.*

*I now set sail on uncharted seas.*

*With all hands on deck, and with the winds in my favour, I will reach the Promised Land.*

*Cheers to our Heroes!*