

*Full-Length Article***Culturally diverse music creation as a prototype for effective intercultural collaboration in health care.**Aaron Lightstone¹, Justin Gray², & Bev Foster³¹*Registered Psychotherapist, Music Therapy Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*²*Professor of Music, Humber College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*³*Executive Director, Room 217 Foundation, Port Perry, Ontario, Canada***Abstract**

This paper will reflect on and explore detailed analysis of the development of an intercultural recording program designed to support the needs of palliative patients and their caregivers. We propose that the process developed and implemented in creating this large body of culturally diverse music recordings could help to inspire further equitable and inclusive intercultural collaborative practices- including health care environments, in music and non-music settings. Several aspects of this collaborative process may be useful for future initiatives that require cultural sensitivity, cultural humility, and intercultural collaboration. As a retrospective analysis, the scope of this paper is limited to an exploration of the processes implemented, subsequent analyses and lessons learned. Possible directions for future research include studies of the effectiveness of this body of musical work designed for patients receiving palliative care and their caregivers.

Keywords: palliative care, music production, inter-cultural collaboration, music care.

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Introduction

The Canadian population is comprised of individuals with varying cultural backgrounds. As such, it encompasses a rich cultural tapestry which is inclusive of a multitude of traditions, cultural practices, and diverse world views. This can create challenges and knowledge gaps even when well-intentioned healthcare providers and institutions attempt to provide culturally safe, specific, and appropriate care for all their patients.[1] In addition to demonstrating their competence in core care and medical skills, there has been a growing expectation over the past three decades for North- American healthcare providers to also demonstrate a high degree of cultural knowledge, cultural competence, cultural humility,[2] and cultural sensitivity.

Culturally competent healthcare delivery has been identified repeatedly in the health professions literature, as a vital strategy for reducing the longstanding disparities in the health status of North-Americans from diverse cultural back-

grounds. Ensuring that frontline workers are culturally competent ensures the possibility of increasing equitable and high-quality health care to all patients, regardless of race, ethnicity, level of acculturation, socioeconomic status, and comprehension of illness and health care.[3] The absence of appropriate cultural competence and sensitivity in health care settings risks behavioral practices and cultural norms being determined by a dominant culture without adequate consideration for what may be differing practices within minority cultural groups.[1]

Prior to the initiation of this project, the Room 217 Foundation's use of recorded music had exclusively featured Eurocentric musical paradigms and aesthetics. Health care providers nationwide who were using the Room 217 musical resources in their practices, had repeatedly identified the need for more culturally diverse musical offerings. In response to this external feedback, Room 217 leadership recognized the need for a music care model in hospice palliative care (HPC) that is reflective of the cultural diversity present in the Canadian population.

Background

For much of the history of professionalized music therapy the musical materials used by music therapists and in the training of music therapy professionals gave primacy to Western musical materials, usually European classical music.[4-6] In the

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Bev Foster, address: Box 145 Port Perry, ON, L9L 1A2 | E-mail: bfoster@room217.ca | COI statement: Funding for research was provided by the Arthur J.E. Child Foundation and the FAVDTR Foundation. The program and subsequent research work was managed by the Room 217 Foundation. Authors AL and JG were contracted by the Room 217 Foundation — a health arts charitable organization — to complete the project and the associated research. Author BF is employed by the Room 217 Foundation. No authors stand to benefit personally or financially from the publication of this work. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

late part of the 20th century and early 21st century, academic music therapy writers began to embrace the need for music therapists to be knowledgeable of a more inclusive range of diverse musical traditions.[7-8] Music therapy theory had for a time previously been deeply influenced by theories from the field of psychology particularly the “person-centered” focus of such thinkers as Carl Rogers.[9] In the early 21st century these theories expanded to include “music centered” theories which suggested that music has unique therapeutic properties in and of itself.[4] While this proved to be a useful way to conceptualize the music therapy phenomena, this led to the formulation of “culture-centered” music therapy.[10]

This term refers to the recognition that although music has unique aesthetic and therapeutic properties, it is deeply intertwined with and inseparable from culture. Further, “The necessity of and ability for culture is something universally shared among human beings. Human beings are born cultural so to say with the capacity and need for cultural learning”.[10]

Since 2005, Room 217 has been undertaking various initiatives to advance the use of music in healthcare settings. One of Room 217’s initiatives is the production of recorded music products that are designed to facilitate a calming aesthetic environment which might contribute to the psycho-social-spiritual care needs of HPC patients and their caregivers. In 2014, a program review was conducted in 84 health care facilities to understand the clinical usefulness of Room 217’s first 12 albums (Collections 1 & 2). Findings from the program review suggest that Room 217’s previous musical offerings impacted patient care for people who were dying in Canadian hospice palliative care programs and facilities in the following five ways.

Improved quality of life by:

- Promoting sleep
- Adding a sense of peacefulness to the space
- Reducing agitation and restlessness
- Making eating enjoyable

Assisted in relationship completion through:

- Release and closure
- Promoting presence even when no one was there
- Providing intimate space between caregiver and loved one/client

Decreased feelings of isolation and fear by:

- De-stressing caregivers
- Reducing anxiety
- Mitigating resistance

Helped to meet psychosocial and spiritual needs by:

- Providing comfort

- Enhancing communication through reminiscence
- Companionship on the journey
- Providing a backdrop for expressing grief and/or mutual support
- Supporting reflection and meditation

Provided distraction:

- From pain
- Through soothing relaxation
- By providing another alternative (i.e. instead of TV)

In addition to this program review, an unpublished survey-based program evaluation was conducted in 2018 which identified the need for culturally diverse offerings, to meet the needs of diverse Canadian HPC patients (see Appendix A). In response to these findings, the leadership at Room 217 began to formulate how a new collection of music reflecting the aesthetics and cultural practices of diverse cultural communities could be created.

In their mandate to promote the intentional use of music in health care settings the Room 217 Foundation was acutely aware that music, culture, health, and healing are deeply intertwined and that working in the richly diverse Canadian milieu would require a well thought out broadening of the musical cultures that the organization represents in its output of recorded music products.

It was at this point that the Room 217 Foundation leadership identified that they did not have the adequate background, connections or skill set to create recordings reflective of the cultural diversity required. This realization was largely in relation to Room 217’s lack of experience with and understanding of diverse global musical paradigms.

Materials and methods

In order to pursue the established goal of creating culturally diverse recordings, Room 217 recognized the need to consult with expert musicians and cultural insiders. This motivated Room 217 to form a creative partnership with authors AL and JG.

When initially consulted by Room 217, authors AL and JG were engaged as project managers, producers, and creative leads. One of the first tasks undertaken was to conduct a formal review of cultural competencies within the Room 217 music creation team. In order to guarantee a respectful and equitable environment for artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, it was essential that a code of best practices be well defined, which would inform best practices throughout the creation of the proposed music project. Some of the best practices that were adopted included the following production rules that the creative leads were committed to following included:

- Master musicians, health care providers, caregivers, and other cultural insiders from the relevant cultures would be engaged in a consultative process as an integral part of the process. These individuals would represent the cultural needs and values of the communities being engaged (and ultimately served) by this project.
- All participants would be properly compensated at fair market value for their time and expertise.
- The creative leads would not compose or record music for a given project until the consultative process with the relevant cultural insiders was completed.
- The creative leads would offer participating musicians the opportunity to compose or co-compose material for the recordings. Composer credit would always be equitably shared and registered with the appropriate Performing Rights Organization (PRO).
- In every focus group, song writing session, or recording session the creative leads/ producers would endeavor to foster a safe, equitable, culturally diverse, and respectful environment.

Consultation

As was established in the identified best practices, consultations took place with appropriate representatives of the cultural groups who were being engaged in the project. These consultants included cultural representatives, musical experts, and healthcare professionals.

As with all creative processes, there are some considerations which must be established before an equitable process can be ensured. These include clarity, time commitment, communication, and honesty. As such, each member of this consultative process was compensated at a rate which reflected common professional industry standards which were confirmed with each member of the creative team prior to professional engagement. Throughout the projects, the producers endeavored to ensure respect, fair compensation, efficiency, and transparency in all processes. These practices were supported through Room 217's active fundraising and flexibility, which helped to promote an equitable consultation process.

The consultants were engaged through a series of focus groups. These focus groups were implemented at important junctures throughout the creative process and became the cornerstone for ensuring that equitable practices prevailed at all stages of the project. Several consultants were engaged in private consultations if logistics prevented them from attending the focus group.

Selection

The first consultation process was to determine the specific cultural music the collection should include. Through consultations with a diverse set of music and cultural experts, it was determined that this collection would be organized into 6 large geographic areas. This first consultation process included members of the Room 217 team. The group began with the concept that each of the 6 new albums in the collection would represent world continents. They tested this against various cultural groups represented in Canada and ruled out Antarctica, Australia/Oceania (not highly represented), and Europe (Room 217 had 18 other albums of Western music genres.) Based on population size, the following geographic areas with diverse-sounding music were recommended to the project leads: East Asia, India, Africa, South America, Indigenous North America, and Mid-East.

These were selected based on a collection of factors, including identified cultural groups in Canada [11] and musical traditions which were identified as appropriate for the first collection of this project. This was informed through a combination of factors, including the artists who identified interest in participating in the project, as well as being recognized for musical experience and expertise. Ultimately, the selected continental groups were Africa, India, South America, East Asia, West Asia, and Indigenous Canada. While it was recognized that each of these continental regions is home to a variety of diverse cultures, it was confirmed through the consultative processes that there could be enough musico-cultural common practices to create cohesive music that emphasized the iconic soothing sounds (in terms of instrumentation and musical vocabulary) of the continental regions.

Once this vision was established, a separate focus group team was organized to represent each broad cultural/continental region. These focus groups of cultural consultants included master musicians, academic musicians, health-care providers, professional artists, and family caregivers from relevant cultures.

Each focus group was facilitated by the project-leads /producers, and on occasion with Room 217 leadership in attendance. These groups were designed to ensure representation of as many cultural diasporas as possible within each geographical region. The focus groups were also careful to ensure representation of gender, age, and cultural heritage in order to further guarantee equitable representation in the discussions. Expert musicians, cultural insiders, and in some cases caregivers were invited to participate. The focus group participants were invited based on the project leads' personal knowledge of their experience, expertise, and qualifications or from recommendations trusted associates. Each group session

was 3-4 hours long. One focus group session was held as part of the pre-production process for each album. When important experts were not available for a focus group, an arrangement was made to speak with them separately to gather their wisdom and knowledge.

Focus group goals

The primary goal of each focus group was to collaboratively design a process for creation which respected the cultural knowledge and traditions which were being referenced in the music. The consultation with the first focus group established how the creative process for the first album would work. The project leads intentionally entered the subsequent focus groups with no assumptions that the other groups would follow the same format.

The focus groups had rich and illuminating discussions and explored many musical, cultural, and medical topics. Examples of topics that were discussed in the groups included:

- The role of music in death and dying in the respective cultures.
- The nature of “pan-continental” music in the respective cultures.
- The extent that the project leads could and should compose music for this project.
- Examples of pre-existing music that could inform this project.
- The iconic musical sounds of each respective culture.
- The meaning of “soothing music” in each respective culture.
- The extent to which vocals should or should not be included.
- The extent to which Western instruments (guitar, keyboards) should or should not be incorporated into the compositions.
- Which specific instruments and musicians should we consider having on the recordings.

One goal of the project was to create a new body of music compositions and recordings that could contribute to a soothing acoustic environment for patients. Another goal was creating this new music with culturally diverse aesthetics with artistic and cultural integrity and authenticity. This made the focus groups an extremely important part of the creative process as it provided the initial information and inspiration that the composers needed in order to begin the creative process and to proceed and complete it for each respective album. While this project had many goals that are outside the scope of typical recording projects, it was still in many ways primarily a creative music production project.

As such, all of the information acquired through the focus group process was discussed, synthesized and filtered through the compositional skill, and knowledge and artistic instincts of the composers. This led to the information base required for the project leads to propose a creation process, to write the music for each album and to propose a creation team of culturally specific session musicians for each album. This provided further opportunities for dialogue and creative input. In the context of this artistic project functioned as a process that would be akin to member checking in a research project.

In each cultural context, the each of the 6 continental focus groups were encouraged to follow their own trajectory, as no two musical traditions or cultures that we worked with were the same, and therefore, no one creative process could be perfectly applicable to each of them. Some of the musical topics that were covered in every focus group discussion included aspects related but not limited to content such as: an examination of the creative process; compositional approaches; musical elements to be utilized; tempo; instrumentation; pre-existing musical content; the balance between composition and improvisation; existing music to listen to inspire and inform the process; specific production techniques and processes; compensation; time commitment; copyright and ownership and future royalty rights.

A particularly important topic that was discussed in each group was the degree to which the compositions should be created collaboratively. For example, all the focus groups agreed with the compositional method of having precomposed themes, and pre-composed musical structures to contain improvisations performed by the various musicians. Across the entire project there was a spectrum of collaborative practices suggested by the focus group musicians. The Middle Eastern and East Asian groups suggested that project leads should compose all the music according to various musical parameters suggested by the focus group and then call the musicians for recording sessions.

This was contrasted by the First- Nations’ musicians who proposed a completely collaborative process. They suggested that the lead vocalist (a First Nations’ singer/ drummer/ songwriter) should compose short melodies and vocables that would be given to the project leads to produce into longer and more elaborate production demos. Then the full group of musicians would meet for a combined (two-full day) collaborative workshopping, writing and recording session. In the middle of the spectrum was the African roots album that was co-written by the project leads with two of the focus group musicians. The other focus groups each had one musician who wanted to co-write a specific piece for the album with the project leads composing the remainder of the material. These focus groups developed the dialogue and knowledge base required for Room 217 and the producers to seek permission

from these community members/cultural representatives to move forward with the creation of the proposed music, and with a collection of proposed artistic practices and artists.

Results

This project resulted in 6 complete albums of music, totaling 57 tracks (over 6 hours of music), which were created through an inter-cultural collaborative process with 24 expert musicians and 39 consultants, representing many diverse cultures from nearly every continent. Just as music operates in music therapy to become a transformative agent and prototype for adaptive (non-musical) behaviors, [12] we observed through this process, the music acting as a transformative object at a systemic level.

The authors of this paper propose that aspects of this process can be adapted to other healthcare initiatives that involve intercultural collaboration or the integration of divergent paradigms. As musicians with extensive training and experience in diverse musical traditions we are particularly interested in the process by which divergent paradigms and world views can come together and can create something new whose sum is greater than its parts. A number of considerations were consistently emphasized by the focus group participants and subsequently implemented by the creative team. They are described below.

Familiarity

While there was some acknowledgement in focus groups that there could be value in recording well-known songs from various cultures, it was also unanimously acknowledged that using pre-existing compositions could make the music collection less culturally inclusive, due to the cultural specificity often associated with iconic songs. In all instances, the focus groups recommended that new, original music, would be the most appropriate vessel to be able to respect the varying decisions and goals established in the focus group and production team meetings.

Universality

In order to achieve universality in the musical offerings, there was also a consistent recommendation from the group of experts to use familiar musico-cultural materials, including instrumentation and familiar musical elements (melody, form, rhythm, and harmony). In all of the focus groups, some of the experts suggested a playlist of reference songs for the project leads to study. The playlists consisted of pre-existing recordings that the focus group experts felt would be useful for

the project leads to be aware of for a variety of musical and sociological reasons (e.g., lists useful or iconic chord progressions, iconic rhythmic vocabulary, an iconic song, or performing artist, particularly soothing playing techniques for particular instruments, instrumentation and arrangement practices to consider, etc). The experts encouraged the project leads to use the songs on the playlists as models and examples of what they thought the music created in the project should sound like. These pieces served as models for instrumentation, tempo, harmonic or modal structures, rhythmic structures, and other musical elements to be implemented and emphasized. Studying the music on these playlists became the first step toward inspiring and informing the compositional process for each album.

This result of this guidance from the focus groups, encouraged the project leads to use familiar sounds (instrumentation and musical idioms) rather than specific songs in their compositional process. As such, in each focus group considerable time was spent exploring and discussing the following questions:

- What are the iconic soothing sounds (instruments and musical vocabularies) in your culture?
- Are there iconic sounds in your cultural music that would generally not be considered soothing and should be avoided?
- Does your culture have a tradition of music being used to sooth or calm people in distress or near death?

The findings that resulted from these discussions were addressed during the compositional stages in order to determine the most appropriate musical elements to be implemented into the composition and thus influencing the creation process for each respective cultural music theme.

Appropriation

Regarding music creation, appropriation can be understood as a dominant culture using musical elements of a minority culture without the appropriate respect, knowledge, permission, acknowledgement, and compensation.[13] In each focus group, this topic was addressed directly, to ensure that the project leads would compose and create the music with the appropriate respect and knowledge required to do justice to the musical traditions in question. This is where the playlists and musical elements were clearly defined as guidelines for the compositional process.

The project leads also discussed which musical elements from the respective cultural groups they would have permission to use and did not engage with any aspects of each tradition which were deemed inappropriate to include in this project. For

example, in response a focus group discussion around the use of music in death and dying, one musician performed a song for the group from his culture and explained how this song is played in the moments before a loved one is dying. Everyone in the focus group was deeply moved by this performance and some participants suggested that consideration be given to recording this song for the project. The performer's response was that this genre of his music tradition would be perceived as too sacred and as such inappropriate to include on a recording. He expressed interest in recording an improvisation that was inspired by the song in question. When he came to the studio to record, he recorded several improvisations in this spirit, which the project leads used as the foundation for one of the pieces on the album.

Regarding acknowledgement and compensation, the project leads prioritized fair compensation and transparent acknowledgement. In contemporary commercial music practice, the use of instrumentation, and common melody, harmony, rhythm, and form is not commonly protected by copyright. This has been historically abused in commercial music production, and it was identified by the project leads, that the Canadian legal standard was not rigid enough to provide equitable remuneration. As such the composition credits were shared among the 8 musicians who co-composed music for the project. All musicians involved in the project were compensated above market rates for all professional consulting and recording activities. This was acknowledged as an equitable approach by all participants of the project.

Pan continental music

The project goal of creating a 6 CD collection did impose some limitations on the scope of the project which were discussed in detail within each focus group. As previously identified, this project was organized into 6 large geographical regions. It was identified in each focus group that there is no single musical paradigm that can adequately represent such large geographical regions.

Within every culture there are numerous distinctions between many musical forms (folk, pop, film, art music etc.), traditions and regional styles. Each focus group concluded that in many cases the diverse cultures and musical forms hailing from a continental region commonly shared similar instruments, overarching musical paradigms, and musical languages. Thus each group recommended a pan-continental approach to composition and recording. As one example, it was recommended by the African music focus group that although there are too many distinct African cultures to be represented on one album, many African cultures share common instrumentation, musical structures, and musical syntax.

The group suggested that we should create music that would combine the sensibilities and musical knowledge of musicians from Ghana, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, and Canada to create a Pan-African ensemble, pointing out that there is a well-established pre-existing tradition in the African diaspora of Pan-African ensembles.

Iconic and familiar soothing sounds

Each focus group was able to identify the iconic instrument sounds that represent their respective musical tradition. In many cases they also identified that some sounds or aspects of their musical culture would not be perceived as soothing, as that was not their purpose or role in the music. Each group made lists of iconic soothing sounds from their cultures that should be featured on the recordings. The results of these discussions inspired the instrumentation for each album and are shown in the following chart.

Continental group of cultures	Iconic Soothing Sounds
Africa	Voices, flutes, kora/ n'goni, drums, shakers, electric and acoustic guitars, bass
Indian sub-continent	Voice, electronic drones, bansuri, sitar, guitar, bass, bass veena
Levant/ North African / Central Asia (Middle East)	Voice, qanun, oud, clarinet, nay, duduk, Persian hand percussion, electric piano
Turtle Island	Voice, drums, flutes, guitar, bass, violin
East Asia	Flutes, shakuhachi, pipa, raun, gayangaum, Persian hand percussion
South America	Voice, Latin percussion, nylon string guitar, charango, ronroco, andean flutes, pan flutes

Establishment of compositional and improvisational techniques and structures

The focus group discussions included exploration of how the music should be composed and recorded. The findings from these discussions served as a guide for the compositional and

recording process for each of the 6 collections. The goal of this process was to ensure that representatives of each musical culture, were able to help shape a process which would allow for authentic expression of the artists involved in the recording process.

Many musicological considerations were established and followed during the compositional and recording process. This included appropriate tempo, musical form, rhythmic structures, tonal centers, modality, harmonic progressions, and the prominence of improvisation in each musical tradition.

In each focus group, it was also established which members of the team would be most appropriate to co-compose the music for the project. In some of the projects, it was established that it would be most appropriate for the project leads to compose most of the music. In other projects, it was established that it would be more appropriate to share the compositional roles. The six CD collection features 8 composers from diverse backgrounds who collaborated on the creation of the music.

Gaining permission

The authors/creative leads for the project are musicians with considerable educational, studio, and performing experience in several musical traditions from around the globe. They have several decades of experience working with musicians in professional contexts from a wide range of musical cultures. Despite their collective expertise and breadth of experience, it was acknowledged at the onset that this project would require the authors to facilitate the creation of music inspired by cultures outside of their own. As such, it was a priority for Room 217 and the authors that there be no misappropriation of any cultural knowledge at any phase of this project. It was therefore important to have the approval and blessing from members of the focus groups and musical participants to ensure the absence of appropriative practices.

Part of valuing the contribution and knowledge of the focus group consultants was to value their time and creative contributions to the music. As such, policies were established to compensate participants appropriately for their participation in focus groups and recording sessions at rates above current musician union scale. Further, everyone involved who contributed to the compositional process is registered with SOCAN (the composers PRO in Canada). Financial compensation was deemed appropriate by the members of all participating communities.

In some instances, it was also deemed important for those involved to help create music that was authentic to their cultural voice and tradition. They also expressed caution that certain aspects of their cultural knowledge should not be commercialized or even recorded at all. These conversations were important learning moments for the creative leads and

opened the door for dialogue and creation of new music. In one example, a musician performed an example (during a focus group session) of music that is played for people near death in his culture.

Each member of the focus group was deeply moved and interested in recording a similar performance for the project. The musician explained that this would not be comfortable for the reasons described above. Further discussion however revealed that they would feel comfortable improvising a piece of music with a similar intention and musical vocabulary for use on the recording. This is an example of the kind of dialogue that took place, which helped to ensure that all members felt safe and respected throughout the creative process.

Discussion

Music therapists often speak about the ways in which music can be used to accomplish goals that are outside of the musical domain.[14] Because music is a complex psycho-social activity that recruits and utilizes behaviors, brain functions, and skills from many diverse areas of human functioning, it can be used to transform individuals, groups, and systems.

The described project was first and foremost a music recording project, with the primary and overarching goal of creating six commercial music releases. The producers/creative leads (Aaron Lightstone and Justin Gray) and the funders (Room 217 Foundation) also had several other non-musical goals that are often considered to be outside the scope of a typical recording project. Just as most music therapists aim to use music to catalyze some kind of non-musical transformation the individual level, the Room 217 Foundation aims to use music in care settings to transform healthcare systems.

Just as music in therapy can evoke prototypical behaviors and experiences in individuals, music itself can be an activity that provides a prototype for systemic or societal change. This can be observed throughout history when musicians reach out to their musical neighbors to build bridges across ethnic, religious, or national lines despite prevailing attitudes of mainstream society. The last few years have seen an increasing call for greater diversity in healthcare leadership and greater sensitivity to the needs of minority and marginalized communities in the healthcare system. [15-17]

Just as music and musicians have pushed the boundaries in the past and demonstrated how society can celebrate rather than shun difference, we hypothesize that aspects of this music for our healthcare project can pave the way for similar non-musical initiatives that aim to increase diversity and amplify minority and marginalized voices in health care. While we acknowledge that music provides a unique container for an intercultural process such as this, we also hypothesize that much of what we learned and much of what we did to achieve

success is transferable to other intercultural endeavors according to the following framework.

Cultural Humility - Acknowledging the organization's knowledge gaps

As we reflect on the process and the recordings created, we recognize that the very first step in such a project was cultural humility on the part of the leadership team at Room 217. They listened to their audience and recognized the need for a much greater degree of cultural diversity in their product line. They quickly realized that the creation of diverse non-Western music forms of music represented a complete paradigm shift for the organization and that outside experts who could assemble the right team would be of paramount importance.

At the outset of the process, Room 217 made a commitment to not only fund the composition and recording sessions, but also the research and development of a process that could be designed to seek engagement and permission from expert cultural insiders from the relevant cultural groups. The resulting focus groups allowed the creative leads to engage in meaningful conversations with members of diverse communities representing a diversity of knowledge and opinions related to the musical, cultural and healing practices of diverse cultures. These conversations allowed the producers to form a creative team and procedures for each album that reflected the recommendations, suggestions, and permissions of the focus groups.

Recruiting and listening to multiple voices and perspectives

It is important to note that while there were numerous similarities across groups in terms of what they recommended there were also significant differences as well. It was important for the producers to be flexible and open to changes in established procedures to accommodate the recommendations of each focus group.

Limitations

While every effort was made to be as systematic, equitable, and inclusive as possible, this was still at its core an artistic endeavor. As such, anything and everything created during the project is through the lens of experience of the primary creators

doing their best to consider all the information and advice gleaned during the consultative process, while composing and creating within their available skills set. The project had an ample timeline and budget but like any project it had to be delivered by a deadline within the constraints of the deadlines and budget provided.

A larger budget and timeline might have allowed for an even more extensive consultative process and perhaps different information to inform the creative process. The experts that were selected to form our consultative group were not in any way randomly chosen. The producers are deeply embedded members of a vibrant community of professional global musicians and academic musicians based in one of the world's most culturally diverse cities. Individuals were invited to participate (as musicians or consultants) because the producers had either worked with them on previous projects or because a trusted colleague had recommended them.

Each meeting included a gathered group of articulate, experienced experts who could have a rigorous intellectual exchange around the subtle aspects of the project¹. The groups included a diversity of demographics which included Indigenous Canadians, immigrants and refugees, and Canadian born descendants of immigrants and refugees. Consultants included people from nearly every continent, ranging in age from early 30's to mid-80's. An even more extensive consultative process with a larger and even more diverse group may have yielded different results. For example, in one of the focus groups, there was rich discussion around varying cultural norms, and world views around death and dying. This yielded useful information for that album. If we were to plan a similar project again, we would ask the participants more explicitly about this topic.

Conclusion

The authors and the Room 217 Foundation set out to create a collection of 6 culturally diverse albums of music for use in HPC and other healthcare settings. The goal of the project was to create authentic intercultural music with a high degree of artistic, academic, and aesthetic integrity. No study has yet been conducted on the clinical effectiveness of these recordings on its intended end users (palliative care patients and caregivers) so it is therefore beyond the scope of this paper to

¹ The focus groups were a convenience sample drawn from the extended professional networks that the project leads have developed over the past two decades working in both healthcare and intercultural music spaces. Participants were invited to participate in the group based on criteria such as: They were known in the community as an expert / master musician in a relevant tradition, the project leads had worked with them in previous projects and trusted their judgement and expertise, they had significant health care experience (including a well-known palliative care

physician who was in-coming president of the national medical association), they were recommended to the project by a trusted colleague. 25 musicians participated in the writing and recording of the music with an additional 12 consultants who participated in focus groups or 1:1 consults but did not play on the albums. Additionally, three First-Nations elders who were not available for the focus group provided one on one consultation regarding the First Nations album and a local First Nations band office provided roughly 40% of the funding for the First Nations album.

comment on the effect this music has had in clinical settings. That said, early anecdotal feedback has been positive. It is recommended that future research be designed to evaluate the clinical effectiveness of the collection as no research has yet been done on that aspect of the project.

While this was first and foremost a creative recording/composition project, a great deal of time, energy, and resources went into creating an ethical and intercultural collaboration based on deep listening, mutual respect, and a commitment to equity practices. This resulted in permission from the cultural insiders who were engaged as focus group consultants to move forward through the process to create a product being granted by the community leaders whom we consulted with.

While deep and meaningful intercultural collaboration can be daunting, organizations (particularly in health care) should not fear intercultural collaboration or even the integration of competing world views and paradigms, as the results of undertaking such collaborations, when done with care and intention, can yield rich and meaningful results. The importance of going to the source and consulting with community leaders and experts is an extremely crucial component of the process.

People engage in music and music making for a multitude of reasons. Music therapists have theorized [1] that because music recruits' function from so many different brain functions and brain regions, music can instigate therapeutic growth and change in functional areas outside the scope of music. Cultural studies scholars [18-21] have investigated how music can instigate social change within an entire culture.

The authors of this paper propose that a project such as the one described here can be used to instigate (non-musical) change within specific systems (like health care institutions). Just as music participation recruits' function from so many related sub skills in an individual person, music operates in complex ways in different cultures, and may be a bridge to creating change within specific institutions and systems.

About the Room 217 Foundation

The **Room 217 Foundation** is a Canadian, music-based health arts social enterprise. Room 217 produces and delivers purposely designed music products, education, training, and certification to improve quality of life and care by supporting caregivers and care communities to increase engagement and life enrichment. During October 2022, the six-album recording project described in this paper was awarded the "Innovation of the Year" award at the McGill International Palliative Congress in Montreal.

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Biographical Statements

Aaron Lightstone is a Toronto based music therapist, composer, producer and performing artist. Lightstone's breadth of experience as a music therapist in Canada's multicultural epicenter has provided him with first-hand knowledge of the need for diverse music in healthcare settings. Lightstone's professional music career is centered around Toronto's vibrant world music community. As a result, Lightstone has developed meaningful musical relationships with artists from across the globe.

Justin Gray is a Toronto based music professor, producer, educator, composer, recording engineer and performing artist.

Gray is also an ethnomusicology PhD candidate. Embedded in Toronto's world music scene, Gray regularly produces and performs alongside musicians from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. These two recording artists both have considerable experience in performing and composing in a wide range of global musical forms.

Bev Foster is the founder and executive director of the Room 217 Foundation, a health arts organization improving the culture of care with music, Ontario, Canada.

Appendix A – Making Dying Spaces Beautiful – Survey Report

Pearson S, Foster B. 2018

Background

Since 2005, Room 217 has created two collections (12 albums) of music designed for palliative and end-of-life care. Following our 2013-2014 study, users have asked if we could create more albums, specifically for two group of clients/residents they are seeing more of: baby boomers and newcomers to Canada.

The BOD has prioritized this production project as the next investment once the Pathways Singing Program for dementia care is completed and launched successfully.

This report represents the first step in the process: a survey of Canadian hospice palliative care workers. We conducted the survey live at our exhibit at the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Conference in Ottawa September 2017.

The purpose of the survey was to get a sense of what hospice workers would think would work best to meet the needs of their clients. The survey will not necessarily define the six albums we will make, rather give us some initial background from those closest to patients/clients/residents in hospice palliative care in Canada.

Survey Design & Methodology

The survey was designed by Sarah [Pearson] & Bev [Foster] based on Sarah's experience as a music therapist working in hospice palliative care in Kitchener, ON, Canada and Bev's relationship with hospices across Canada. A 2-sided printed page that was handed out to a variety of workers who visited our exhibit. Participants were told about our project and asked if they would be willing to fill out a survey that would take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Surveys were anonymous. They handed the survey back to Sarah or Bev at the Room 217 exhibit.

Survey Questions

- Boomer Sounds Survey: Here is a list of potential albums that will accompany Boomers with songs they love at end of life. Circle your top 10 picks. (Participants given a list of potential albums listed in Table 1)
- Diverse Sounds Survey: Diverse Sounds will be comprised of 6 albums with diverse sounds that expand the reach and impact of music at end of life. Circle your top 6 picks. (Participants given a list of potential sounds listed in Table 1)

Demographics

Participants included nurses, doctors, social workers, researchers, family members, volunteers etc. 50% knew about Room 217 music and 50% did not, however they were interested in music with this population. There were 49 participants.

Analysis

Results were tabulated and will be used to help inform our producers about which album themes (boomers) and sounds (diverse sounds) may be considered in production of our two new collections.

Sound	TOTAL	
Native Drum and Flute	36	73%
Fiddle/Violin	34	69%
Guitar/Lute	32	65%
Bagpipe, Ullian pipes	20	41%
Medieval chant	15	31%
Percussion ensembles	15	31%
Bowls	13	27%
Vocalize	12	24%
Jaw Harp	12	24%
Sitar	11	22%
Accordion	9	18%
Throat singing	9	18%
Zheng and other		
Chinese zithers	6	12%
Ambient electronic	6	12%
Ukrainian chants	6	12%
OTHER (Harp, flute, marimba, didgeridoo)	4	8%
Kalimba/Mbira/Udu	2	4%
Balalaika	2	4%
Appalachia	2	4%
Shokuhachi	1	2%
Gamelon		0%

Table 1. DIVERSE SOUNDS

TITLE	THEME	TOTAL	
Summer Love	love songs	30	61%
Road Trip	roadtrip favourites	29	59%
Feelin' Good	happy songs	28	57%
Best Friends	songs of friendship and love	26	53%
Home Again	songs of home and family	26	53%
Just Peace	instrumental string classics	25	51%
Jukebox Junkies	music of the 50s	24	49%
Heart Beat	songs that are about the heart	22	45%
Angel Wings	inspirational songs	21	43%
Broken Record	favourites of the 60s	21	43%
Winds Blowin'	the timeless melodies of Bob Dylan	21	43%
Folkie Folk	the unforgettable music of the 60s folks scene	21	43%
Not Afraid	songs of hope and courage	19	39%
Purple Haze	70s rock	18	37%
Autumn Leaves	songs that refer to colours	16	33%
Changin' Times	protest songs of the 60s and 70s	15	31%
Letting Go	songs of courage and release	14	29%
Swan Songs	songs to say goodbye	10	20%
Woodstock Favs	songs from Woodstock	9	18%
OTHER	Adagio for Strings, Country, Old Counry, Cape Breton Music	4	8%
Anthemic Electric	prog rock favourites	3	6%

Discussion & Recommendations

1. 3 participants did not answer the DIVERSE SOUNDS survey. When asked why, they said they didn't know how to answer because they didn't know the instruments or much about others' music.
2. For the DIVERSE SOUNDS collection, we will need to hire culturally competent producers who can help us implement this knowledge with master musicians from regions around the world.
3. For the BOOMER collection, the next step will be to do a survey of users and ask them to choose their top 10 songs; then cross-reference with this Table 2 list.