



Liner Notes

Volume I

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All net revenue will benefit Hospice VNH (Vt/NH) & the NH Youth Suicide Prevention Assn.
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Foreword

It's a dream of writers to have their stories read and reread, and their words savored, yet often a book gets only one reading by its owner. But since the halcyon days of memorization and recitation have been eclipsed by the electronic age, relatively few prose or poetry books get more than one author-to-audience-member exposure.

Songs may actually be far more influential than books as a communication medium. Songwriting requires a variety of gifts: skilled songwriters craft timeless melodies with lyrical poetry, and their best lyrics and music are memorable even separately, one without the other.

Add to this the highly developed instrumental and vocal skills wielded by some of the best singer-songwriters, plus their ability to connect with an audience in concert, and it's no wonder these artists' creations are memorable, and some performances spellbinding.

I enjoy books and admire writers, but I'm sure that the combination of lyrics and music makes songs a more universal form for communicating, and in many cases more enduring. Then, too, I can sing a song while I'm involved with many different tasks, so music is a frequent companion.

The songs in this collection lift my spirits and have helped me transcend the anguish of the death of a child. A day without songs would be forlorn, and I hope this music will help others as much as it helps me.

Michael Whitman • Executive Producer

The Water Lily – Priscilla Herdman

This poem, by Australian poet Henry Lawson (1867–1922), was inspired by a haunting dream related to him by a woman friend and was set to music by Priscilla Herdman in 1972. The tune came to her as she first read the poem at the home of dear friends who had lost their infant to illness on a sea voyage many years earlier.

On numerous occasions, parents grieving over the loss of young children or infants have told Herdman that this song has given them great comfort. She dedicates it with love to the Goldstein family, for their son Michael.

Priscilla Herdman – guitar and vocal

Jay Ungar – fiddle

A lonely young wife in her dreaming discerns
A lily-decked pool with a border of ferns.
And a beautiful child, with butterfly wings,
Trips down to the edge of the water and sings:
“Come, mamma, come! quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water lily!”

And the lonely young wife, her heart beating wild,
Cries, “Wait till I come, till I reach you, my child!”
But the beautiful child with butterfly wings
Steps out on the leaves of the lily and sings:
“Come, mamma, come! quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water lily!”

And the wife in her dreaming steps out on the stream
But the lily leaves sink and she wakes from her dream.
Ah, the waking is sad, for the tears that it brings,
For she knows it’s her dead baby’s spirit that sings:
“Come, mamma, come! quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water lily!”
“Come, mamma, come! quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water lily!”

Ashokan Farewell – Jay Ungar

Although written for a place – Ashokan is in the New York Catskills – this tune has become indelibly linked with a letter from a Rhode Island officer to his wife at home, on the eve of his fatal battle in the Civil War. Chosen as the theme music for Ken Burns’ epic 1991 Civil War documentary on PBS, this Grammy award-winning waltz has the flavor of several centuries, although it was written in 1982.

Jay Ungar – fiddle

Molly Mason – guitar

No Time To Say Goodbye – Tom Paxton

The news of an unexpected death always arrives suddenly and, in recent decades, usually by telephone. This song for a friend of Paxton's, from a recent live album, captures the feeling of tumbling emotions, thoughts and recollections as we try to grasp the enormity of the new situation when we learn that someone we love is suddenly gone from our life.

Tom Paxton – guitar, vocal
Roy Husky, Jr. – upright bass
Eric Weissberg – guitar
Stuart Duncan – mandolin
Mike Auldridge – dobro

It was a phone call in the night –
The kind you hear before it rings.
It was a phone call in the night,
When you can hear an angel's wings.
When you know before you answer
That it's someone's time to die,
And then I learned that it was you,
And as I stood there I could feel you passing by –
There was no time to say goodbye.

There was no time to say goodbye;
No time to thank you for the years.
There was no time to say goodbye –
A lamp gone out, light disappears.
And as I stood there in the darkness,
There were more tears than I could cry,
For you were here so totally,
It seemed impossible that you could ever die –
There was no time to say goodbye.

*There are pictures in a box,
In a room in a house long miles from here,
There are old seashells and rocks;
Faded labels from our days of German beer.
There are postcards from Montana;
Faded drawings and some drums,
And I can't recall the rest –
Oh, God, you're never really ready when it comes.*

There was no time to say goodbye –
I was delayed in getting home.
There was a missed connecting flight,
And when I got here you were gone.
Someone handed me some coffee;
A tiny sandwich made on rye,
I put it down. I stood there looking
At your picture on the mantel, wondering why
There was no time to say goodbye.
No time to thank you for the years.

Unité – *Christina Tourin*

This piece came to Vermont harpist Christina Tourin during a break when she was performing at the Florida Aquarium in 1998: “From out of nowhere, angelic voices began to sing, and without realizing it, I began playing along with the singing. This happened around the time of Princess Diana’s accident and passing, and having two sons the same ages as hers, my heart reached out to them. This angel-sent gift is dedicated to the memory of Diana.”

A second-generation harpist, Tourin directs the International Harp Therapy Program, based in Jericho Center, Vt., which brings the soothing, healing benefits of harp music to hospitals and hospice centers, rehabilitation centers and psychiatric units in the United States and England. She also builds harps, and trains musicians to bring the spiritual power of harp music to patients in a variety of settings.

Christina Tourin – harp
Christine Alicot – flute
Salina Briseno – angel voice

No Man’s Land – *Eric Bogle*

This ballad, by a transplanted Scot now living in Australia, was written after Bogle toured some WWI battlefields and cemeteries in France around 1970. Willie McBride is fictitious, but so poignantly real that several families have claimed him as their relative, according to Bogle. Willie certainly represents the archetypical young-man-with-promise sacrificed in the trenches, in a war that left many survivors feeling they had lost far more than what had been won.

Eric Bogle – guitar and vocal

Well how do you do Private William McBride
Do you mind if I sit here down by your graveside
And rest for awhile in the warm summer sun?
I’ve been walking all day and I’m nearly done
And I see by your gravestone you were only 19
When you joined the glorious fallen in 1916
Well I hope you died quick and I hope you died clean
Or Willie McBride was it slow and obscene?

*Did they beat the drum slowly, did they play the fife lowly?
Did the rifles fire o' er you as they lowered you down?
Did the bugles sound "The Last Post" in chorus?
Did the pipes play the "Flowers o' the Forest"?*

And did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind
In some loyal heart is your memory enshrined
And tho' you died back in 1916
To that faithful heart are you forever 19?
Or are you a stranger without even a name
Forever enclosed behind some glass pane
In an old photograph torn and tattered and stained
And fading to yellow in a brown leather frame?

But the sun shining now on these green fields of France
The warm wind blows gently and the red poppies dance
The trenches have all vanished under the plow
No gas, no barbed wire, no guns firing now
But here in this graveyard it's still no man's land
The countless white crosses in mute witness stand
To man's blind indifference to his fellow man
And a whole generation who were butchered and damned

And I can't help but wonder now, Willie McBride
Do all those who lie here know why they died?
Did you really believe them when they told you the cause?
Did you really believe that this war would end wars?
The suffering, the sorrow, the glory, the shame,
The killing, the dying, it was all done in vain
For Willie McBride it all happened again
And again and again and again and again

Patchwork Quilt – Michelle Lanchester

Anyone who has seen one of the AIDS quilts will likely have the memory of that experience brought vividly back by this song from this world-famous group. It's a passionate statement of the belief that the fabrics of all our lives are "sewn into one."

Sweet Honey In The Rock: Ysaye Maria Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel,
Evelyn Harris, Aisha Kahlil, Bernice Johnson Reagon

They unfolded your lives one by one
They laid out your patchwork under the sun
And people gathered from miles around
To witness your quilt spread over the ground

*And then they called out your name (three times)
Oh and you will live forever
You know that I'll be loving you just like a patchwork quilt*

Well there were men and women, mothers and fathers
Sisters and brothers, daughters and sons
And children and babies, and lovers and friends
They all lay before me sewn into one

Your lives had meaning, your lives had joy
You touched so many people, many more than you will know
And you wrapped yourselves around me
As I walked down these rows
You're letting me feel your beautiful souls

*I feel the warmth of your lives (two times)
Oh and you will live forever
You know that I'll be loving you just like a patchwork quilt*

My heart spills over, flowing with tears
I cry for your suffering and for your shortened years
And I'll take you with me as I walk away
Remembering you who have died with AIDS

*Yes, I remember your names (two times)
Oh, and you will live forever
You know that I'll be loving you
Just like a patchwork quilt
I'll be loving you like a patchwork quilt...*

Breck's Song – Sydney Long

Written after the suicide of a friend's son, this song captures the impossible longing by surviving family and friends to have been able to do more for a youth who felt he just had to end his pain or fear.

“We were awakened early on an April morning with the news of Breck's death. I was drawn to the piano, sat down and played the opening verse of the song. The music and the lyrics came to me in completed form, as you hear them here, as if from from a source outside myself – ‘I wish I could have held you.’

“More of the song came during the course of the day. It was the last thing I played before we gathered at Breck's house, waiting for his family to return from their vacation, where the news had reached them.

“After several weeks, and many tears, the ending came to me: it speaks of going beyond the torture, finding and connecting with Breck...and finding peace. The most powerful feeling I had throughout the creation of this song is that I was speaking for his father.”

Sydney Long – piano
Liz Kalter-Long – vocal

*I wish I could have held you
I wish I could have taken your hand
And kept you safe with my love
From your darkness.*

We do all we know how
We do what we can
Now, my dear one,
I must let you go.

*But I wish I could have held you
I wish I could have taken your hand
And kept you safe with my love
From your darkness.*

My arms long to hold you
My hands reach to caress your face
My love searches to find you
In your new place.

*But I wish I could have held you
I wish I could have taken your hand
And kept you safe with my love
From your darkness.*

Although I cannot hold you
Although I cannot take your hand
My heart joins with you now my son
We are one!

Angle of the Light – Anne Hills

“Someone once told me that the depth of a loss remains constant; it’s only the frequency of the feeling that changes. The first year after the death of a loved one is filled with anniversaries that drag us to that extreme grief again and again. With time and love, these undertows become less frequent.

“‘Angle of the Light’ was written nearly a year after my friend Catherine Jackson died. As the searing light of summer moved into the muted amber of autumn, I was constantly reminded of one particularly wonderful day we had shared toward the end of her life. These images came more vividly at the turning of the day, when the sun is low enough to cast deep violet shadows, tugging the heart toward night. I would remember our laughter and also recall Catherine’s mother’s response to my sympathy. ‘Yes, we’ll miss her so much...but we were all so lucky to have known her.’”

Anne Hills – guitar, vocals

Something about this hour of day,
Memories flow freely,
As the earth turns into space,
Leaving time and distance reeling.
And in this leaning toward the night,
There is nothing without shadow,
And no dark without the bright,
In the angle of the light.

We were sitting on a hill,
Finding four-leaf clover,
Sure that we had time to kill,
Turning love and friendships over.
Words were borne upon the breeze,
Like September leaves we caught them
Shared their colors, let them go
Just another day in autumn.

*But in that leaning toward the night
There was nothing without shadow,
And no dark without the bright,
In the angle of the light.*

Winter’s chill had long gone by,
Spring and summer passed before me.
Nature heaved a heavy sigh,
Resting up for next year’s glory.

Colder winds would shake the trees,
Four-leaf clover will stay hidden,
For fickle luck brought only grief,
And these memories come unbidden.

*In this leaning toward the night
Where there's nothing without shadow,
And no dark without the bright,
In the angle of the light.*

Turning Toward the Morning – Gordon Bok

Gordon Bok wrote this song in the 1970s when he was an artist-in-residence at College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor, Maine, for a friend who had had a very difficult year. As Bok put it, “She was looking for courage, to keep on plowing into it.” He hoped she’d be able to see beyond the cold, dark winter, when spring would come to the hills and trees and flowers, in a way that’s more permanent than anyone’s troubles.

Gordon Bok, Ann Mayo Muir and Ed Trickett – vocals, guitars and hammered dulcimer

When the deer has bedded down and the bear has gone to ground
And the northern goose has wandered off to warmer bay and sound,
It’s so easy in the cold to feel the darkness of the year,
When the heart is growing lonely for the morning.

*Oh, my Joanie, don’ t you know that the stars are swinging slow,
And the seas are rolling easy, as they did so long ago?
If I had a thing to give you, I would tell you one more time
That the world is always turning toward the morning.*

Now October’s growing thin and November’s coming home,
You’ll be thinking of the season and the sad things that you’ve seen;
And you’ll hear that old wind walking, hear him singing high and thin,
You could swear he’s out there singing of your sorrows.

When the darkness falls around you and the north wind comes to blow,
And you hear him call your name out as he walks the brittle snow;
That old wind don’t mean you trouble, he don’t care or even know,
He’s just walking down the darkness toward the morning.

It’s a pity we don’t know what the little flowers know,
They can’t face the cold November, they can’t take the wind and snow –
They put their glories all behind them, bow their heads and let it go,
But you know they’ll be there shining in the morning.

Now, my Joanie, don't you know that the days are rolling slow,
And the winter's walking easy, as he did so long ago?
And if that wind should come and ask you, "Why's my Joanie weeping so?"
Won't you tell him that you're weeping for the morning?

Jane's Whistle – *Anne Dodson*

"This tune was written for a dear friend named Jane Kerrigan, who died suddenly in her early 40s. When I went to help her family go through her house, her brother found a set of O'Riordan wooden whistles that I had long coveted, and he asked if I knew anyone who might like them. They came home with me and 'Jane's Whistle' wrote itself that night. I played it at her memorial service a few days later. Joining me on this version are Abby Newton and Kristen Tescher, both of whom are glad to be included in this project...as am I."

Anne Dodson – whistle
Kristen Tescher – harp
Abby Newton – cello

Time to Learn – *Tim O'Brien and Pat Alger*

In the liner notes to the album *The O'Boys*, O'Brien wrote, "Two of my siblings died before their time. My mother tells the story of my older sister Mollie, who would have been three years old at the time, waiting on the front porch for our older sister Brigid to come home from school, weeks after the funeral. My older brother's death when I was fourteen was definitely something I had a hard time understanding. I can't imagine how my parents got through all that. Pat Alger and I tried to write about the sudden and strange finality of death and how we deal with it."

"Time To Learn" was written all in one sitting, according to O'Brien, after hearing that a good friend had also just lost a sister.

Tim O'Brien – bouzouki and lead vocal
Scott Nygaard – guitar
Mark Schatz – bass
Jerry Douglas – resonophonic guitar
Edgar Meyer – arco bass
Mary-Chapin Carpenter – harmony vocal

The hand is cold that once held mine
I can't believe you've really left this world behind
I can wait, and I can hope
I'll get over this in time.

*It takes time to learn when someone's gone for good
They're not coming back like you wish they would
In the empty hours when you miss them so
Then it's time to learn to let them go.*

Your last hours we never knew
We never had a chance to say goodbye to you
Words unsaid, and things undone
We'd just begun, and now we'll never see them through.

*It takes time to learn when someone's gone for good
They're not coming back like you wish they would
In the empty hours when you miss them so
It takes time to learn to let them go.*

*It takes time to learn that you're gone for good
You're not coming back like I wish you would
In the empty hours when I miss you so
Then it's time to learn to let you go.*

Language of the Heart – Jim Stewart and Bernie Houlahan

Stewart and Houlahan, from New Brunswick, wrote this song in memory of two friends, Capt. Dave Kennedy and Canadian poet Alden Nowlan. When Houlahan performed it at the funeral of a family friend, he couldn't remember the just-written tune and had to call for instant inspiration. They later considered his on-the-spot improvisation better than the original, and adopted it.

The group's name is taken from the title of an ancient Cornish song celebrating the coming of summer. Hal An Tow Day – May 8 – is still observed in Helston and a few other small villages in Cornwall.

Hal An Tow: Jim Stewart, Bernie Houlahan and John Murphy – guitars and vocals

You will always fly, even though your journey's over
The stars will chart your sky and the moon will be your lover

*Fortune plays a lonely game that forces some to part
But here and there are much the same, in the language of the heart*

You will always sail, even though the winds would leave you
Your ship will never fail and the sea can never grieve you

You will always sing, though the melody lies broken
Your voice will always ring, though the words are never spoken

You will always be, even though time would disown you
For you have set us free, those among us who have known you

For JL – Russ Barenberg

Recognized as one of the finest acoustic guitar players in Nashville, Barenberg wrote this music on the day after John Lennon's murder in 1980.

“I was sitting in my living room playing the guitar when the news of John Lennon's death came in on the radio. Chords rolled out with the tears, and I sang this simple melody straight through. The stinging sadness was intensified by a vivid appreciation of John Lennon and what he gave us, and I was furious that the too-easy act of pulling a trigger could end such a rich life. As the tune emerged, it received those feelings and helped me work through the tragedy. Writing it was a grieving process, and it was in sorrowful acceptance and a celebration of Lennon's spirit that the tune (and I) came to rest and found some solace.

“The arrangement on this recording is based on repeated statements of the melody. Evolving melodic voices and accompaniment textures give the overall piece its dynamic shape and movement. At the core of the ensemble sound is the combined timbre of viola and alto saxophone.”

Russ Barenberg – guitar
Evan Stover – viola and violin
Billy Novick – alto saxophone
Andy Statman – mandolin
Marty Confurius – bass

Lux Aeterna – John Rutter

This is the final movement from Rutter's 1985 Requiem, whose text comes from the Anglican Church's Burial Service (1662 Book of Common Prayer, slightly altered), and the Latin text from the Requiem Mass.

Prof. Gordon Spice, Chairman of the Music Department at Washington and Lee University, writes, “For centuries the words of ‘Lux aeterna’ have provided solace and comfort to those in mourning, but rarely has the text been set to music as appropriately soothing and serene as that of John Rutter. First, the ‘voice from heaven,’ in the form of an angelic soprano, assures us of the eternal rest bestowed upon the deceased. Then, over gently undulating strings, the chorus enters with the Latin text. Rutter's simple melody, consisting of long, sustained notes, may be heard as a musical manifestation of ‘eternal light,’ shining perpetually. The closing prayer, ‘Grant them rest eternal, Lord our God,’ with its characteristic three-note descending melody, extends rather than interrupts the dominant theme of ‘Lux aeterna’ – that of eternal peace, serenity, and hope.”

Donna Deam, soprano
The Cambridge Singers and City of London Sinfonia, conducted by John Rutter

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me,
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,
For they rest from their labors: even so saith the Spirit.
Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine: cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis.
*(Eternal light shine upon them, O Lord: with all thy saints for evermore, for thy mercy's sake.
Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord: and may light perpetual shine upon them.)*

Before Their Time – A Benefit Album

All net revenue from sales will go directly to two service organizations:

Hospice VNH (Vermont and New Hampshire)
The NH Youth Suicide Prevention Association.

Information about these organizations is included on the following pages. Each has tax-exempt status that makes all donations tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

HOSPICE VNH (Vermont and New Hampshire)

Hospice VNH, located in White River Junction, Vt., is one of 3100 local hospice organizations in the United States that provide end-of-life care and support for patients and their families. Hospice care has become best known for assistance to families and individuals that makes it possible for terminally ill patients to die in the familiar surroundings of their home, instead of in a hospital or nursing home.

The philosophy of hospice care actually focuses on living, according to Marie Kim, director of HVNH: “If we recognize that dying is a part of life, that it is a natural and powerful event, we can enjoy a freedom not from sorrow, but from the fear that limits our ability to love, and to live all our days more fully.”

Dame Cicely Saunders, M.D., founder of the first hospice in London in 1967, wrote, “You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but to live until you die.”

Hospice care extends to families and friends. After a death, hospices also offer support services to help survivors cope with their loss, since taking the time to go through the grief – instead of trying to avoid it – is the first step in healing. Bereavement support groups offer one way to regain one’s emotional footing. “Telling our story is a way of affirming the life of someone we miss,” says one survivor – “a way to move our grief along and contribute to our own healing.”

Hospice VNH and many other local hospices offer special kinds of support for survivors, such as:

- “Healing Through Grief” – a HVNH program of support for children and adults in schools and other organizations. Hospice personnel provide education and training for school staffs and parents, as well as crisis intervention and support following a crisis. Information is available from Hospice VNH.
- Survivors of Suicide – a support group for family members or friends who may struggle with the complexity of a death by suicide. Unique among causes of death, suicide forces survivors to deal with a number of issues that are often difficult for others to understand. Emotional stress often continues far longer after a suicide than after death by natural causes, and suicide support groups offer an emotional haven where people can talk with others who truly understand their issues and needs.

In all ways, hospice care is about individuals helping each other with the many stages of living.

Funds to produce Before Their Time were donated to Hospice VNH, a program of the Visiting Nurse Alliance of Vt. and N.H., a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. Donations were received from 75 individuals and:

The Byrne Foundation

The Greater Piscataqua (NH) Community Foundation

Jeffrey Gutin Fund for Young Adults

Respect For All Youth Fund

The Lyme (NH) Foundation

Breck Whitman Memorial Fund

The Upper Valley Community Foundation (Vt. / NH)

The New Hampshire Youth Suicide Prevention Association

The New Hampshire Youth Suicide Prevention Association develops and coordinates the state's suicide prevention strategies through community and school education programs, and prevention and intervention efforts.

NHYSIPA's membership personifies the broad experience and perspectives of professionals in the fields of mental and public health, teaching and school administration, public safety and accident prevention, local and state government and, of course, parents – all of whom are concerned about and committed to reducing the tragic incidence of suicide among young people.

Since its formation in 1994, NHYSIPA has

- held two statewide “Saving Lives – Saving Futures” conferences;
- supported – and helped establish – regional and community-based teams to develop and implement prevention and intervention strategies in the state's 10 mental health districts;
- collaborated with the New Hampshire Bureau of Substance Abuse Services to provide funding support for community-based education and youth suicide prevention efforts;
- provided media contacts and speakers for schools and communities on the subject of suicide incidence and prevention; and
- worked with newspaper editors and reporters to increase awareness of the CDC's recommendations for responsible reporting of suicides to minimize incidents of suicide “contagion.”

Administrative services for NHYSIPA are provided through the Injury Prevention Center at the Dartmouth Medical School in Hanover, N.H.

For further information, contact

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Hospice Bereavement Support Programs

When someone you love dies, especially one who dies “before his time,” family and friends experience profound grief and loss. Suspended in a world that seems unreal, survivors are astounded that the sun continues to rise, the world continues to spin and people around them maintain their normal routines. Survivors struggle to understand how everything around them can seem so unaffected, unchanged and routine when the world of their lives has been forever changed. They ask, “How could this happen?” “What’s ‘it’ all about?” “Who am I?” and “What, oh what, am I supposed to do now?”

These and other questions, as well as a myriad of thoughts, feelings and behaviors make up the world of the griever: it’s an unfamiliar, lonely world; an isolating world, a world from which survivors seek relief and a desire for things to return to normal. They soon learn, however, that it is impossible to return to normal. “Normal” no longer exists. A “new normal” must be created; a life must be rebuilt; a relationship must be transformed – from one of physical presence to one of memory. But how, oh how, does one go about doing that?

Many people find solace and support at hospices. Hospices understand the needs of survivors; they are expert in helping people cope with illness, loss, death and grief. In hospice bereavement programs, survivors learn that grief is natural and that it affects the way they think, feel, behave, relate with others, experience and express their spirituality – who they are – everything about them. Professional staff help survivors understand that keeping stories, memories and images alive helps to transform their relationships with loved ones who have died. Survivors are welcomed into support groups, classes, workshops, seminars, teen programs, children’s camps, family retreats and other programs.

In these groups and programs, survivors learn about grief and have opportunities to share with others who are struggling to cope with loss. Survivors often find that they feel less isolated and alone when they meet with others who share similar thoughts, feelings and concerns. Hospice bereavement programs can also provide counseling to individuals, couples and families.

If you – or someone you love – are grieving the death of someone “before her time,” I hope you will find comfort and encouragement in the beautiful songs and music in this collection. I hope, too, that you will contact a hospice bereavement program in your community. There, you will find people asking the same questions, seeking the same understanding, struggling to create a “new normal” and working to rebuild their lives. When you participate in hospice bereavement support groups and programs, you will find solace, support – and hope.

Call the National Hospice Organization Helpline at (800) 658-8898 to find the nearest hospice program.

Barbara Bouton, Director • Bridges Center • Alliance of Community Hospices

The Music Makes a Difference

I have played music like this on the radio for over 25 years. I have played it because I love what it says to me. It's honest and earthy and real. But I had no idea just how important this kind of music was to me until my wife Sandy got sick.

When we found out she had cancer, we decided that we would fight every step of the way to healing. We changed what we ate. We laughed a lot more. We got plenty of rest and walked every day to keep fit. We even changed what we thought about, what we read, what we looked at. It was a hard struggle to do all the things that we thought were needed for her to beat the odds, but we persisted. Well, we didn't get healing, but we did get something that made the effort worthwhile: we got closer.

When it became apparent that we were not going to win our battle for healing, we talked about what was next. And I confessed that I didn't think I could continue to do the radio program without her. Sandy was a vital part of the show. She helped plan the music, answered mail, did the computer work, did the billing and generally kept the ball rolling. She made it possible for me to go into the studio and to concentrate on the music. I did radio and she did all the work. How could that continue with her gone?

She lay there on the bed for a long moment, and then said, "Why would you give up the music that is so important to you at a time when you need it the most?"

Again, she was right. So I determined that I would make every effort to keep doing the radio show no matter what happened. That was 1993. There were times when I was not sure I could make it, but the effort of a radio program was not the problem.

Eugenia Price, in her book *Getting Through The Night* (Harper), wrote: "The missing will go on, but the hard work of grieving, the darkness, the agony, will end. You will be whole again."

Her words came true for me, and I assure you, the music made a difference. The songs about hope. The songs about love. The songs about life and death kept telling me that I could make it. I can't imagine a day without songs like the ones you hold in your hand. They may make you cry, but they will give you strength. The music makes a difference.

Mike Flynn • "The Folk Sampler, Music from the Ozarks" – aired weekly on many NPR stations

Music and Healing: An Ancient Tradition

Music has always played an important role in world culture, judging from the ancient art of every continent and the discovery of 35,000-year-old instruments in Siberia. It draws its power from its most compelling aspect: the ability to go places that words can never go. Both communicating and churning emotion, music bypasses the higher brain centers and heads straight for the gut.

Music can affect us without our conscious cooperation, as the writers of film soundtracks are well aware. Back when movie theaters played music before the show, I once sat in my seat and began getting nervous. Nothing particular was weighing on my mind, but as the minutes went by I felt increasingly queasy. It wasn't a panic attack, or even a bad lunch – it turned out to be the soundtrack from *Psycho*, by the master composer Bernard Herrmann, who knew just how to manipulate sound for maximum scariness and suspense. I didn't need to see Hitchcock's visuals for the score to do its work, since it was designed to induce anxiety all by itself with its careful mix of disharmony, space, and unsettling rhythms.

We are physically affected by music – its patterns of tension and release impact our heart rate and breathing, which in turn affect our energy level and perception of well-being. Most Western music is written at the range of the human heartbeat, about 70 to 80 beats per minute; when the music is faster, our own rhythms rise to meet the pace. Other influences include whether the music is choppy or smooth, major or minor, and how repetitious it is – Ravel's *Bolero* is a good example of how music can become hypnotic and insistent.

Instrumentation and the tone of the instruments are also important, as is our past association with them. Sound is second only to smell in its ability to trigger memories – a song from times gone by can bring back all the imagery and emotion of that period.

Harmony is another powerful component: when the music resolves – or returns to the initial, “home” chord – there's a feeling of safety and completion. When it doesn't

come back, or delays its return, it can be agitating. Some people enjoy styles that tend to wander off without leaving a forwarding address, like some modern classical music and free jazz. But while novelty and suspense can be interesting, not everyone has the same tolerance for auditory risk – the majority seems to prefer their music without too much dissonance or surprise, especially when they're upset. That's when the old familiars come out: those records with all the pops and hisses, the CDs with all the smudges.

That's also when music moves from being a source of entertainment or stimulation to providing a wellspring of comfort. Feelings that are blocked and need expression are coaxed out; the pain we often hide from other people is finally welcome. Autistic children who respond to nothing else will tiptoe into the world, however briefly, for music. Schizophrenics use it to distract themselves from the voices they hear. Sometimes the sheer beauty of sound reassures us that, no matter what terrible things have happened, the universe still has goodness and hope and angels.

Whether we melt into gentle flutesong, boogie around the kitchen to soul music, or glory in the thunder of Beethoven, music encourages our most natural, uncomplicated responses, taking us back to simpler days when there were fewer obstacles between ourselves and our emotions.

All emotions are valid in music: joy and anger, grief and despair – even the ones that embarrass us, like self-pity. With music, we can feel them all without having to disguise or label or explain them to anyone. Worries that were building up may drift away while the music plays; the tears that were gathering can finally fall. Music provides the setting, the inspiration, and the excuse for letting go.

It also supplies something else: the great comfort of recognizing that whoever wrote or played what you just heard probably knows exactly where you are. You are not alone.

Judith Schlesinger, Ph.D. • Psychologist, musician and author

July 17, 1999

My TV follows the tolling watch and the wait for news about John F. Kennedy Jr., Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and Lauren Bessette. A moment marked in time. Another death... and another... and another... all before their times.

Music is a language of time. It pulses with beats and measures, with tempos and movements. A language of the soul, music voices that which is often inexpressible: crescendos and crashing accents, softness and tranquility, harmonies and dissonances, accelerandos and ritardandos, subtle nuances, and interplays of sound and silence. Music provides a here-and-now microcosm, a container for experiencing opposites and paradoxes. It engages its participant through familiar forms and takes one into unexpected twists and turns of sound.

Grief is a language of time. It pulses on...and on...and on. Whether with anxious turbulence or languid sorrow, grief beats on in our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. The realities of a loss are experienced differently six months after a death, than at its onset. Looking back ten, twenty, and fifty years later, the loss will have influenced larger “movements” in our lives. Like a grand symphony, meanings of the loss will have traveled through countless “developments” and “recapitulations.” Like a seasoned folk song, grief can move us into solitude or community, into expression or reflection.

Music and grief have partnered each other through all of time, as is evidenced in all cultures, religions, and civilizations. While grief is a universal experience, music provides dialects of expression. Examples are rampant, from Greek odes to tribal dances, laments, dirges, Tibetan chants, African-American spirituals, classical requiems, Scottish bagpipes, Hmong reed pipe players and drums, country ballads, and on popular MTV videos. Even today from your and my TV sets, professional news reports are paired with music to set moods or honor flashback memories.

As you, the listener, experience the music on this album, you will likely be reminded of losses in your own life. The music can be comforting or confrontive, or both. Beethoven once said, “Music should strike fire from the soul!” Especially with this collection of music, that fire may warm or burn. Likely, powerful depths from the soul will be sparked with any of these compositions, from Tim O’Brien’s “The hand is cold, that once held mine,” to Sweet Honey In The Rock’s “I’ll be loving you, just like a patchwork quilt.” These songs may give you words and melodies for expressing your own feelings or thoughts. They may take you toward a new insight or understanding. They may go against your grain, creating a dissonance against your own experiences and understandings. In the midst of these songs, what is your “song”?

Instrumental music, like Anne Dodson's "Jane's Whistle" can similarly foster nonverbal expressions, providing a doorway into your inner images and emotions, and engaging you wherever you are, without the directed guidance of texts or stories. A sense of collective consciousness can be added with the historical elements of Jay Ungar's "Ashokan Farewell," Eric Bogle's "No Man's Land," and Christina Tourin's "Unité." A prayer, like John Rutter's "Lux Aeterna," can nurture spirituality. In the midst of these pieces, what is awakened in you?

Whether experiencing this collection out of tragedy or curiosity, we invite you to join in the music: tune into and hear the themes and rhythms and harmonies (or dissonances) of your own life-journey. Stirred by the sounds and stories of these musicians, each of us may want to ask:

- What, from each musician's expression, is similar to my grief?
- Do the lyrics or melodies connect with something within me?
- What emotions, thoughts, memories, meanings, or hopes are stirred?
- Is there a person with whom I'd like to share and reflect on this music?
- In addition to this album, what music reflects my life-journey? What music helps me express joy, sadness, anger, grief, hope?

If you are moving through a deep grief, you may want to create a ritual of playing a particular song at a certain time of day, at anniversaries, or at other moments of significance, and note that you may have different responses to the same piece of music, reflecting the meaning of that moment. When tears or resistance come, you can be the conductor – stopping the music, staying with it, playing it again, or deciding how it does or does not express what your soul is saying. You may be inspired to compose your own!

More important than listening to the actual music is listening to your Self. You are forever different because of someone's important presence in your life. You are forever changed and changing because of his or her physical absence. As time beats on, you are composing and arranging different life-music for yourself, incorporating themes learned from your loss and grief.

In time, over time, and through time,
As hearts pulse and souls search on,
May each of us live our time
However long or short or somewhere in between.....

Joy S. Berger, D.M.A. • MusiCare Coordinator • Hospice of Louisville

Suicide: A Unique Bereavement

Survivors of the suicide of a close relative or friend often find their needs unique among mourners because of the many issues involved that are not factors in deaths from other causes.

Many survivors of suicide have reported getting stuck on the path to healing and becoming “functional” again until they had a chance to talk with others who share their experience. Usually a general bereavement support group is not what they need: because of several unique aspects of suicide survival, many people have only been comfortable discussing bereavement by suicide in a “Survivors of Suicide” (SOS) group.

As the value of SOS groups becomes more widely known and appreciated, SOS groups are being formed in every U.S. state and Canadian province – and other countries as well. But many areas remain where these groups do not exist, or the nearest group is too far away to be practical.

SOS groups are simple, low-cost organizations: a professional facilitator is not required and members of the group can usually handle the required tasks and responsibilities. Best of all, these nonprofessional group leaders-by-necessity often find that they help themselves most by helping others.

The American Association of Suicidology’s excellent publication “SOS Support Group Guidelines” – a compilation of columns from “The Leader’s Corner” in the AAS newsletter *Surviving Suicide* – is a valuable “how-to” for people who want to help start an SOS support group in their area.

Call AAS in Denver, at (303) 692-0985, or visit their web page for ordering: <<[http://www.suicidology.org/resources.htm#Support Group Guidelines](http://www.suicidology.org/resources.htm#Support%20Group%20Guidelines)>>.

Use the Internet – for finding information of interest to survivors.

In the late 1990s, the Internet has become the best source for information on topics relating to early death, grieving, bereavement support and other issues.

Any list becomes outdated as soon as it is published, but the following web sites with excellent information were current in mid-1999. All sites have links to other sites with related information, and new sites appear frequently.

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| Hospice Foundation of America | www.hospicefoundation.org |
| National Hospice Organization | www.nho.org |
| NHO page of web links: | www.nho.org/cgi-shl/dbml.exe?template=/hospice/links.dbm |
| The Compassionate Friends (for bereaved parents) | www.compassionatefriends.org |
| American Foundation for Suicide Prevention | www.afsp.org |
| Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN) | www.spanusa.org |
| The Link Counseling Center (Atlanta, GA) | www.thelink.org |
| Growth House (book source) | www.growthhouse.org/books/books.htm |
| Befrienders International (The Samaritans) | www.befrienders.org |
| American Association of Suicidology | www.suicidology.org |
| Funeral and Memorial Societies of America (non-profit) | www.funerals.org/famsa |
| King's College, University of Western Ontario | www.wwdc.com/death |
| National Alliance for the Mentally Ill | www.nami.org |
| Suicide Awareness\Voices of Education | www.save.org |
| Helping Others Prevent and Educate About Suicide | www.hopes-wi.com |
| Suicide Information and Education Center of Canada | www.siec.ca |