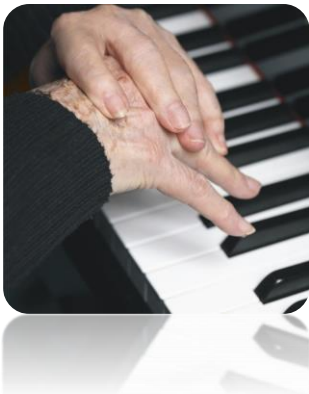


## Room 217 - Care through Music – by Bev Foster

“Music unravels a memory, mends a thought, masks a pain, recaptures a moment and leaves a trail of healing in its gentle wake.” – Dr. Kalyan Subrahmanyam

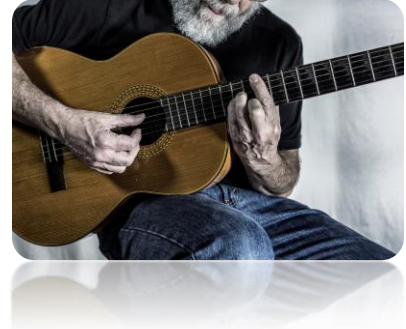
I have always had a strong sense that music is my close companion along the journey of life. It has accompanied me through various life passages and has become associated with the people, places, events and feelings in my life. It may be that way for you, too, because music is a powerful medium. Its effects can stimulate or calm us, excite and persuade us, call us to act, inspire us and lift our spirits.



As a professional musician and music educator for more than 40 years, I know how powerful music is. I’ve seen its effects in people of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and health situations. Music reaches into every human domain – we move to music which affects our sense of coordination. When we sing, we oxygenize our bodies, and release oxytocin, the bonding hormone. Music effects our moods, making us sad or happy, or when we are sad or happy, music can change our mood. Music helps us remember, like when we learned the alphabet song – A-B-C-D-E-F-G. It triggers memories, happy and painful ones. Music brings us together. We share connections and bonds around music. Music reaches our soul, bringing comfort, peace and beauty.

There was an experience that changed my relationship with music forever. In Room 217 at a small rural hospital one hour northeast of Toronto, my mom, five siblings and I sang around Dad’s bed as he was dying. We sang his songs, the hymns he loved, and watched how he was comforted by them, how they gave him peace, strength and courage. And we felt stronger somehow, able to let dad go with music. I left seeing a need for especially designed musical resources for families in life threatening situations, especially at end of life. I was compelled to use music to make a difference in the way we care for people, contributing to their quality of life, quality of care, and quality of dying.

In 2009, the Room 217 Foundation began, named in honour of dad. We started by creating music used for palliative and end of life care. The Room 217 mission is expanding. We lead care partners in an innovative approach to care using music and network communities of learning and practice for mutual support. We equip caregivers with confidence to integrate music into regular practice through our training programs and conferences. We innovate new music care products for a variety of needs like dementia care, and reminiscence. We inspire new ways of doing care through music by sharing insights and knowledge of music and health thought and practice. We collaborate in research that advances music care topics and practice.



Room 217 works with care partners in various settings including long-term and continuing care residential homes, assisted living, hospices, adult day programs, hospitals, Alzheimer societies, community living, private homes and faith communities across Canada. Our website is a treasure trove for those interested in using music in their regular care practice. You will find music care resources, educational opportunities and research online at [www.room217.ca](http://www.room217.ca).



*Bev Foster, MA, BEd, BMus, ARCT, AMus, is the Founder and Executive Director of the Room 217 Foundation, an organization dedicated to music and care. She is an experienced musician and teacher who speaks and writes extensively on the power of music, especially in life limiting situations. Her passion for music enhancing quality of life and care is contagious.*