

Ruth Shushan

The Healing Power of Music

I just spent seven hours at Emergency at the Kitchener-Waterloo Grand River Hospital with my eighty-five year old mother yesterday. Just before the ambulance took her away from her retirement home, I caught up with her and learned the story from her friend and the paramedics.

I heard that after lunch she couldn't walk back to the elevator; she was sweating profusely and was as white as a sheet and somewhat confused. Inside the ambulance mom had an oxygen mask on and was on intravenous and looked really grey, but really, seemed fine. She laughed and talked to me sweetly. I was quite frantic inside, but tried not to show it.

Once the paramedics left with mom, I raced to her apartment to get her purse and other necessities and then drove to the hospital emergency room. Luckily, I had a musical instrument in the car and, on a whim, I grabbed the mountain dulcimer with me and mom's book *Lord of the Rings*, so while we waited for the doctor for two hours, I read the rest of Book One to her and then sang soft, familiar Hebrew songs like *Erev Shel Shoshanim*, and *You Are My Sunshine* with her off and on for five more hours, as nurses and a doctor came and went to get her symptoms, urine and blood samples, chest x-rays, etc. I was worried about mom, but the music and story reading calmed us both down. (We found out after many samples and six hours later that it was a bad bladder infection that perhaps she'd had for months!)

Looking back at that day, my mother spent the time well: she slept for two hours, and when she was awake, she was singing softly, talking to me and my husband and laughing at the three-year old who was dancing and twirling to my songs. At one point both mom and the three-year old were trying to play my dulcimer.

The nurses were obviously pleased and thanked me for the soft music.

One suggested I call the president of the hospital to tell them about this experience.

My guess is that this is why she asked me to call. I began to notice that as soon as I started playing the dulcimer softly, the tone of the emergency room seemed to go much softer. I noticed that people in trauma were yelling and swearing less and there was more soft laughter and comfort in the hall. I felt wonderful myself. And mom was smiling!

The hospital is building a new emergency room, so they want suggestions for better conditions for everyone. I did call the hospital president to make a recommendation to have soft

acoustic harp, guitar, dulcimer, Mozart, and/or any other music that soothes in the new building. Let's hope they listen to us.

Ruth Shushan lives in Waterloo, Ontario, in a house filled with candles and ancient music.

To Err is Human, To Forgive is Divine.

The song "Nancy's to the Lambing Gone" (last issue, p. 26) was printed incorrectly. Here is the corrected version.

Chorus:

Nancy's to the lambing gone,
She won't be back before the dawn,
So we will fill the air with song,
Fill the air with song;
Nancy's to the lambing gone,
Nancy's to the lambing gone;
If everyone will sing along,
We'll fill the air with song.

1. The winter winds begin to howl,
The snow it swirls again;
Jack Frost he leaves his handiwork,
On every window pane;
The spring seems such a world away,
That we can scarce recall,
The joy she brings within our hearts,
Will gladden one and all.

2. When sisters call, they will away,
They will not wait till morning,
They'll take the road, they'll seize the day;
The lambs they are a-borning;
When sisters spring upon the earth,
To revel in its glow,
The winter wind can't chill their hearts,
However strong it blows.

3. When winter starts to lose its grip,
The sisters take its measure;
They mean to soon give it the slip,
And return the earth to pleasure,
And watch the rising of the moon,
The changing of the seasons;
Their learning goes around too soon,
And no one asks for reasons.

4. The river ice begins to crack,
The geese are homeward winging;
The sisters' blood is all astir,
You can hear it in their singing;
Winter puts away its knives,
Jack Frost he throws his brushes;
So let spring madness through our lives,
Like warblers, larks and thrushes.

CSTM volunteers Jill & Gord Sherret had a baby boy Thursday morning, their first child. (Gord maintains the Mail Order Service website. Jill and Gord handle direct sales at folk clubs for the MOS. Jill's parents, Jan and Gary Gregory are former proprietors of the MOS; it's their first grandson.)