

The charms of music can have a therapeutic effect

One of the joys of new therapies for those Arthur Harvey calls "aging folk" is that they often benefit everybody. Nowhere is this more true than in the growing body of knowledge called music therapy.

"People today know music can offer many benefits that are inexpensive and can work on many people simultaneously," says Harvey, a maestro whose range extends from what Dad called "bar-room piano" to conducting sacred music.

Director of worship and music at Calvary-By-The-Sea Lutheran Church, he teaches two courses at the University of Hawaii, conducts weekly music therapy for about 50 patients at Leahi Hospital, and produces a stream of essays and articles.

"Music can change emotional states,



JAN FERRIS

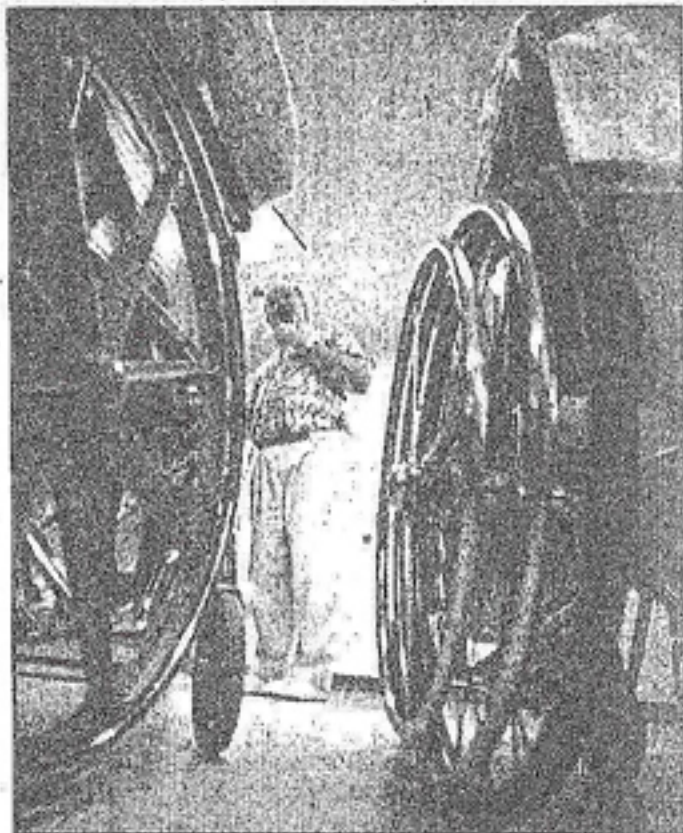
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keep the brain stimulated, and also is reality orientation for people who are disoriented, particularly when it brings back youth and childhood," said Harvey, who began working in gerontology "30-something" years ago. Professor of music at a Kentucky university

for 18 years, he has developed training programs for nurses, occupational and recreational therapists, and medical students.

One of his favorite projects here was the Singing Seniors program at Wai'alea Baptist Church, where he served as a minister of music from 1991 to '94. The group, 25 senior musicians, has given several concerts and performed in nursing homes, the Very Special Arts

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Arthur Harvey sings, accompanied by taped music, with residents at Leahi Hospital in the Recreational Therapy Department. "I see music as a minister," says Harvey, who sings the praises of music therapy.

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Music

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Festival, and at the Bishop Museum.

"Knowing from training and experience that music has tremendous power to enrich our lives, enhance our health, charge our brains and increase memory, strengthen our breathing... and uplift our spirits, I was blessed to see these benefits happen in the lives of the Singing Seniors," wrote Harvey in a recent article.

He left that position — and Hawaii — briefly in 1994 and 1995 to serve as director for a new Center for the Advancement of Arts in Medicine, in Sarasota, Fla. He also is executive director of the Music for Health Services Foundation, which presents conferences and seminars.

He uses five kinds of therapeutic activities with aging persons: singing, playing instruments, listening, moving, and creating (which might include making a video, as one of his Elderhostel classes did).

How can this translate into working one-on-one with an elderly relative?

"One, find songs they like, that represent a positive period in their lives. Acknowledge that with them. Two, sing along with them, and bring in others for singalongs," Harvey noted.

Some of his therapeutic work with elders and younger disabled persons has included the Omnichord, a portable electronic instrument blending autoharp, rhythm machine, and keyboard that allows its player to accompany singers with varying tempos and chords.

In recent years, the Omnichord has been played with everything from fingers and hands to elbows, chin, nose, shoulder, knuckles, and even

Books

Good tapes and CDs to use with elders include "Music From Before You Were Born"; "Songs Our Parents Sang"; "Top of the Charts 1920s"; and "You Sing the Hits." Most are available at Harry's Music Store, 3457 Waiālae Ave., Kaimuki.

Want to know more about music therapy? An anthology edited by Don Campbell, "Music: Physician for Times to Come," (Wheaton, Ill: Quest Books, 1995) contains a Harvey essay: "Music in Ailudinal Medicine," (paperback) is at Borders Books.

toes. It's had positive responses with profoundly retarded adults, with an early childhood toddler program, with visually impaired elderly, learning-disabled students, and autistic children," Harvey explained.

His research has indicated significant memory improvement in aging persons who learn to play musical instruments.

"We worked with a group of elderly nuns who learned to

play recorders, chime bells and other instruments. We found measurable improvements in memory after six months," Harvey said.

"A couple of the nuns (in the study) really got excited about it and wanted me to come back around Easter, when they had gotten so good they were playing for Mass," he said.

"They experienced a major change in energy and alertness levels as well as memory. They were really thankful they had another gift they could give to God."

"I see music as a minister," said Harvey, who received his bachelor's degree in music education (voice) from Gordon College, a small, highly-regarded church school in Massachusetts; a master's degree in music education (applied voice) from Boston University; and his doctorate from Temple University in Philadelphia, where he specialized in music education and psychology of choral music.

"There's almost no situation where I can't find a technique to involve a person. The more deteriorated the person is, the

more you need to do with them.

For example, he cited a woman at Maluhia Hospital who was wheeled to his group sessions there a few years ago.

"She had Alzheimer's, and was nonverbal. Her only true sense of rationality was when we did the weekly music. She came in slumped in a wheelchair. With the first of she could sit up, and she'd sit all the songs with me for an hour. The power of music can tap into her unconscious," Harvey recalled.

He tells of playing a tape of baroque music to an anxious elder awaiting a CAT scan: "Within just a few minutes, her respiration slowed, color returned to her face and her attitude was transformed from one of panic and fear to one of peace."

What's next for this peripatetic music man?

There's a possibility of developing a program with Hospice Hawaii, if a grant application comes through. Also he will teach a course on "Music and Intelligence" at UH this summer.