

Tussen Passie en Compassie

*18 verhalen over Professional Excellence in
Meaningful Music in Healthcare*



Between Passion and Compassion

*18 stories of Professional Excellence
in Meaningful Music in Healthcare*

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How can live music be meaningful in a hospital setting? Since 2016, our research group developed in collaboration with the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) the practice Meaningful Music in Healthcare (MiMiC), a participatory music practice in a hospital setting. In a MiMiC project, a group of three musicians visits a hospital ward for four to seven days in a row to play a wide range of repertoire and improvise in a person-centred way for patients and those who care for them. Responding to the wish of musicians and nurses to further explore their collaboration, in 2019 we started ProMiMiC – Professional Excellence in Meaningful Music in Healthcare. In ProMiMiC the interprofessional collaboration between musicians and nurses as well as the role of the music as a catalyst for nurses' compassionate care within the MiMiC practice were explored, leading to further development of the MiMiC practice. Also, we were able to expand the practice to The Hague, London and Vienna in collaboration with local partners from music and hospital care. After kicking off ProMiMiC in September 2019, we were from March 2020 onwards confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals, our site of research, were highly affected by the COVID-restrictions. A lot of flexibility was therefore required. The situation of the pandemic, however, also led us to explore virtual person-centred music-making in hospitals in addition to the original plan.

This booklet contains 18 stories, highlighting meaningful moments of live music in hospitals in Groningen, The Hague, Vienna and London. With this collection we wish to celebrate and honour the work of the musicians and nurses involved in ProMiMiC and showcase musicians' work in a new practice. Out of the over 50 MiMiC projects that took place in total, we selected stories that demonstrate how it is the professionals in music and healthcare that, with their passion and compassion, make this happen.

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The stories 'A personal concert' and 'Supporting an anxious wait' paint a picture of a typical encounter for the London musicians, working through Zoom on the antenatal wards of a central London hospital. Please note, details have been changed to protect the anonymity of patients and all names are pseudonyms. In the stories from the hospitals in Austria and The Netherlands, all names are pseudonyms and personal details have been changed to protect the privacy and anonymity of the people involved.



From green to blue: a profound connection

Two male patients, Mr. Martens and Mr. Willems, are sharing a room at a surgical ward at the UMCG. They are both very ill, and the curtain between their beds is closed. When the musicians enter, Mr. Martens is asleep, thus cellist Max plays softly Bach at the bedside of Mr. Willems, who enjoys it very much. Then Mr. Martens wakes up and says that he has been listening to the music all along with his eyes closed. Next day nurse Sanne asks the musicians to play during Mr. Martens' wound care. It is a painful procedure, and the music might help both the patient as well as the nurses performing it. From behind the curtain, Mr. Martens requests: "Could you play a Waltz by Strauss?" It works out very well. "Wonderful!" says Mr. Willems. One of the nurses talks on behalf of Mr. Martens: "Mister Martens gives you applause." Everyone is happy, not in the least the musicians, as it means that they get a lot of trust. "I like doing wound care like this", a nurse concludes.

Slowly a strong bond emerges between the musicians and patients. Every day the two men look a bit better. At some point flautist Nicole suggests to the patients to make a piece for them. Clarinetist Frank adds: "what should the music be about, a landscape, a feeling, a colour perhaps?" The two men make the choice for music expressing colours, Mr. Willems green and Mr. Martens blue. A very beautiful piece follows, and everyone can clearly follow when the music goes from green to blue. At that very magic moment when the colour changes, the two men simultaneously turn their heads towards each other exchanging a happy glance, recognizing the moment. It is very moving. Nurse Sanne afterwards comments: "The most wonderful moment was the two gentlemen together. That the other man kept looking around the corner to check: 'Are you enjoying this as much as I am?'" She says throughout the five days of music-making a profound connection has been built between the musicians and the two patients.

Robbie Williams, for grandmother and grandson

Ms. Evers is in the UMCG. She is terminally ill and today she will be going home to pass away. Together with her grandson, who does not leave her side, she has met musicians Nicole, Frank and Max a few days in a row. Grandmother and grandson have a favourite song, Angels by Robbie Williams, and the musicians have made an arrangement to play for them on this last day in hospital. “We have done our very best!” the musicians say to Ms. Evers, as soon as they enter. Ms. Evers seems pleased. They immediately begin to play. The music is beautiful and the grandson immediately starts to cry. An assistant doctor who is present allows her tears to run over her cheeks. Ms. Evers remains composed. “Utterly beautiful”, she says immediately after the music has come to an end. She thanks the musicians a number of times, seemingly keen to prevent a sense of awkwardness. The musicians thank her for allowing them to play for her and her grandson, say goodbye and then leave the room. Nicole bursts into tears immediately after that and goes to the bathroom; Frank, with red-rimmed eyes follows her. Max stays behind, talking softly with the assistant doctor. She says that she is sure that Ms. Evers has accepted the situation. Max then decides that he would like to share the story and music with the nurses on the next day during their coffee break. Soon Nicole and Frank return, and the musicians continue their visit to the ward.

Looking at the patient with other eyes

Max and trainees Michael (double bass) and Esther (viola) visit Mr. Koning daily at a surgical ward of the UMCG. Mr. Koning is a farmer who has had surgery on a fractured leg. He has a hard time being away from his farm and his animals, as the musicians learn during their visits, and his worries obviously put him often out of balance. However, every time the musicians enter and play, Mr. Koning opens up, and seems a lot more happier. At some point the musicians propose to make a piece for him, about a landscape. Mr. Koning immediately brightens up and describes the landscape around his farm.

When he hears the beat in the music he moves his hands to the pulse and smiles broadly. “Super!”, he says “Beautiful! A misty landscape!” Mr. Koning’s nurse Stefan observes during a conversation with the musicians, that his patient seems a lot calmer and happier, and after a few days he even describes him as a “changed man”, where normally this patient is quite moody. Stefan then attends a few encounters with Mr. Koning and suddenly starts to realize that he is a person full of stories and emotions, having a hard time. Stefan goes through a learning process through this example, and observes that, “I thought too easily that his grumpiness had to do with character. But that is not always so. When you are so homesick, you are different from who you are. Through the music this patient started to flourish. I have really learnt something here.”



Meeting a Portuguese man online

It's June 2020, the wake of the first COVID-19 wave in The Netherlands. Nicole, flautist and experienced MiMiC-musician, and Emiel, cellist and relatively new in the team, are calling in from Nicole's living room to a tablet at a surgical ward at the UMCG. The musicians are about to play for Mr. Oliveira, a Portuguese man, for a second time. At his bed is nurse Marlene, who is attending him as nurse today. Emiel announces that they have prepared a Fado piece, upon the patient's request. The piece is impressive. The flute sounds intense and raw, bringing in the big emotions that Fado can carry.

Through the tablet, the musicians can hear Mr. Oliveira whooshing, letting off steam, he is crying. After a few seconds of silence following the end of the piece, the man comments: "very good. This... is Fado. I have never heard it with a flute. But this... is Fado." In a conversation the day after, nurse Marlene returns to the moment of the Fado piece. She says she realised right after witnessing the patient's response to the music that Mr. Oliveira perhaps has more will to live than was her impression so far. She reflects on the effect of the music on the patient and her connection with the patient: "what moved me was that after seeing him experience the Fado piece, I felt he is enjoying life so much. In one way or another, music connects you to the patient. And yes, one way or another it also makes for a different, deeper connection."



Pay raise!

It is the third day of a virtual project with musicians Emiel and Nicole at the UMCG. In a room with four patients, Nicole asks one patient to express a wish for nurse Jantine, with the idea to translate the wish into a musical improvisation. The patient says, looking at Jantine standing beside her: "I wish her a pay raise!" Jantine laughs in response, she finds the idea hilarious. On that moment, other nurses are joining in the room. Musician Nicole reiterates the idea to them: "we will play with the idea of more salary for you, as nurses, so you get what you deserve." The patient adds: "I appreciate your work, but I also know that you are underpaid, that's why." The musicians then start to improvise. The melody led by the flute sounds cheerful, and carries an alternative rock-like tempo. The nurses praise the piece at the end, and conclude with a warm, thankful applause.

Nicole reflects on the moment later that day: "There was a light and positive atmosphere in the room that moment. It felt good to be able to acknowledge the work of the nurses and play a role in connecting the patients and their nurses."

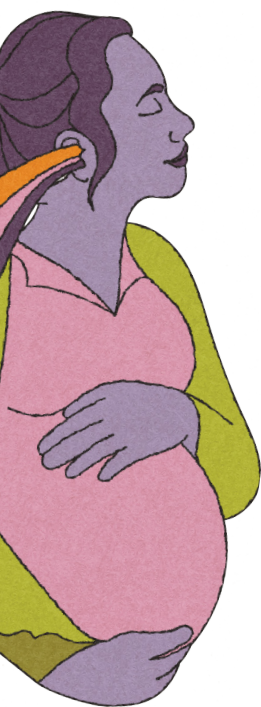


The paradise garden

During a video-call project with the Allgemeines Krankenhaus Wien, musicians Ana and Jan, and music therapist Marta are preparing to play for Margarethe, an older patient. Before the connection with the musicians and music therapist had been established, Margarethe had told Elisabeth, the mediator who is preparing the meeting with the musicians in the hospital via Zoom, about her beautiful garden. The lady misses her garden very much. She describes it as an oasis of well-being; as a paradise. In conversation with the musicians, she enthuses about the pure nature there – about the trees, shrubs and the robins and titmice that often visit her garden. Margarethe then asks the musicians if they will ‘perform’ her garden. The ensemble then plays a piece with lots of trills and birdsong sounds, rather excited and colourful with a few melodious motifs in it – a vivid, cheerful improvisation. After that, Margarethe asks, “Can you hear the truth? You would have chased the birds away! Part of the piece hit my soul, but not my garden. It was too provocative!” Marta asks for a second chance and the patient smiling agrees. In the second improvisation, the musicians play soft and calm music, which reflects the part of the garden, which Margarethe describes as “my idyll, my paradise.” They create a very tonal, grounding piece in F major with a few alternating chords and a long ebbing final chord. After a few bars, the patient whispers to Elisabeth, who is sitting at her bedside: “now they’ve got it!” After the musicians have said goodbye and the screens turn black, Margarethe tells Elisabeth that she was able to see her garden during the second piece and that the piece still resonates within her.

Clapping together

On the second day of a project at HMC Westeinde hospital in The Hague, musicians Helen, Nicole and Laura are visiting an older female patient, whom they met the day before. Nurse Annie is present in the room, sitting next to her bed. Soon another, somewhat younger nurse comes in and also takes a place in the room. After exchanging greetings, Nurse Annie comes closer to the patient and asks gently: "What would you like to hear?". The patient seems to want something calm and soothing. Upon this request, the musicians suggest playing a piece by Bach for her. They start playing *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. The patient seems to be truly mesmerised by the music. Meanwhile the nurses are watching her with a warm curiosity, smiling to her and to the musicians. After the piece ends, the patient wants to applaud, but she seems to have difficulty with putting her hands together. Seeing this, Annie jumps immediately from her seat and says "Come on, I will help you clap, let's do it together!" with an encouraging voice. The nurse holds her hand next to the patient's and they applaud for the musicians together. Touched by this moment, the musicians thank them.



A personal concert

Three musicians, Karen (flute), Laura (saxophone) and Sarah (bassoon), are joined in the virtual Zoom room on camera by a couple in a busy antenatal ward in London. The couple, Esme and Sydney, excitedly explain that they have been in the hospital for a couple of days awaiting the birth of their baby girl. The musicians start with music inspired by the film *La La Land* and then, after chatting with Esme and Sydney, begin a motif-based improvisation based initially upon the opening of *La Vie en Rose*. This airy melody is passed among the musicians, morphing into a French-café-jazz inspired improvisation, accompanied by a light walking bass. The improvisation builds in character, increasing in complexity and speed towards the end, leaving the musicians laughing and breathless as the flute melody tails off. Esme and Sydney laugh with the musicians, clapping, smiling, and chatting animatedly to each other. Esme then turns to the camera and gestures to her belly, sharing emotionally with the musicians that their baby was also moving during the improvisation. As the musicians de-brief afterwards, they reflect on how the moment was a powerful ‘community of sharing music’ across the online space, providing an intimate, personal concert for the family.



The mediating nurse

On the first day of a project at the UMCG, musicians Max, Tina and Thomas are playing *Chandelier* by Sia to Ms. Kuiper. Upon hearing the first notes, Ms. Kuiper starts crying almost immediately. During the piece nurse Heidi enters and remains listening in the doorway. As soon as the piece is over, mediator Kathy walks over to nurse Heidi and proposes to swap places. Ms. Kuiper, who is still very emotional, starts talking; she explains that the music brought back difficult memories. While looking at nurse Heidi, Ms. Kuiper further shares details about her illness and her family. Heidi, seeing the musicians and the mediator at a loss on how to respond to the situation, suggests: "shall we ask the musicians to play one more piece? After they leave we can always talk a little more." The woman is content with this

suggestion. Next day, Max describes this interaction to the rest of the nurses during their coffee break and recounts how potentially uncomfortable the musicians would have felt if Heidi would not have come in. Later, Max reflects on how nurse Heidi 'picked up' how the musicians felt about the situation: "Fortunately there was Heidi. She handled it with great understanding and patience. She gave space for the patient to choose privacy or an emotional outlet in the moment. I admired how she dealt with that in that moment. She was able to help us and her patient to make the moment healing and meaningful."

Humoresque

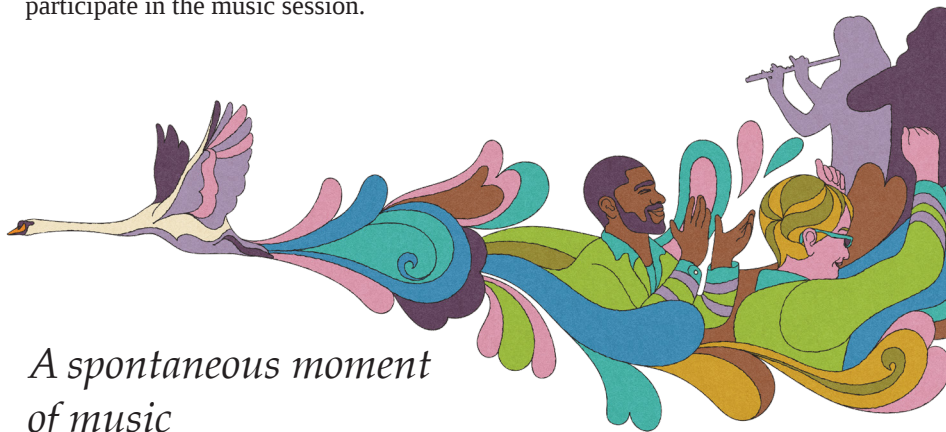
The elderly man in a wheelchair, Thomas, and his personal 24-hour carer, Bogdan, who did not leave his side, and whose particularly close bond was noticeable from the very first encounter, were visited by the musicians on four days in a row at the Allgemeines Krankenhaus. This project week also entailed students who had been prepared over a few months for this particular practice at the music university. On the first day, the obviously classically interested Thomas had mentioned Dvorak's *Humoresque*, a piece he particularly liked. As it turned out, that piece also had a special meaning for the young violinist of the ensemble, Rosie. Thomas' wish and the idea of the *Humoresque* did not leave Rosie's mind when she was home that evening. Overnight she spontaneously arranged the piece for the ensemble. Each musician learned their part by heart the next morning after Rosie sent it to them via WhatsApp. The ensemble met in the preparation room at the hospital to rehearse together. Less than 24 hours later the wish could be fulfilled, and the piece could be played for the visibly moved Thomas and his carer. Afterwards, Thomas tearfully thanked the trio for playing. He said that he had an "uncertain future"; "every hour you play for me could be my last."



The swan on the ward

The ritual at the beginning of each ProMiMiC day is the walk through the corridors on the ward. The musicians walk slowly around the ward while playing their instruments and make their way to the last room on the ward and then return to the heart of the ward – the open-plan lounge in front of the nurses' station. On the way back, the three instruments blend together in one sound and transition smoothly into a pre-arranged piece. On that day the improvisation ends with the famous Emperor's Waltz by Strauss which even inspired one of the nurses to dance. An elderly patient, Gerda, who had been interested in the music during the days before, but did not have the time to listen due to treatments and doctor's visits, also joins in. Nurse Ella would tell us later how meaningful it was for Gerda to dress herself up especially to participate in the music session.

It was very important to Gerda that her hair and clothing would match the occasion. Together with Ella, Gerda listens attentively to the ensemble. After the waltz, the elegant lady spontaneously asks for "something by Saint-Saëns". Cello student Martin plays a version of The Swan from The Carnival of the Animals and the entire ensemble joins in improvising to his beautiful cello solo. The result is a rousing and expressive interpretation of The Swan. Several more nurses pass and pause to listen to the music.



A spontaneous moment of music

The musicians are walking towards their break room in the neurology ward in HMC Westeinde hospital. Meanwhile two paramedics are chatting with some nurses in the corridor. Seeing Laura and her violin, one of the paramedics holds his arms up and moves them as if he is playing the violin. Seeing this, flautist Nicole laughs and says: "We can play for you, you know!" Both paramedics seem very happy to hear this "Yes, please do!". The musicians look at each other and quickly decide to play a version of Mamma Mia by Abba, which they deem to find fitting for the occasion. The cheerful music fills the corridor with joy, the paramedics seem to be very much into the music


while the music seems to invite more audience members. Nurses emerge from both sides of the corridor, watching the musicians and smiling at each other. A nurse sitting behind the front desk is nodding her head to the rhythm. The whole scene feels like a party. After the musicians finish playing the piece, one of the paramedics says enthusiastically: "This was amazing! It felt like live TV. Truly amazing!"

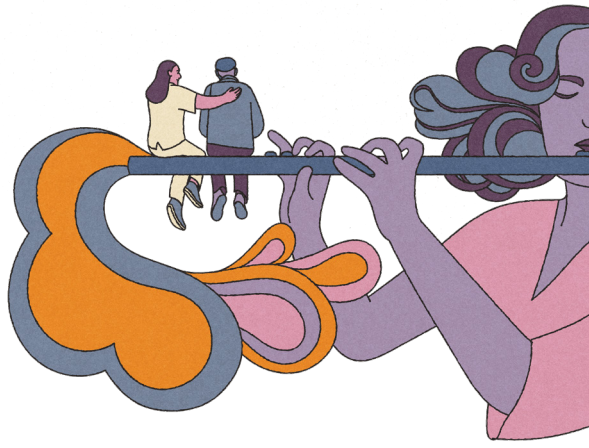


The singing doctor

On the second day in the nurses' coffee break room during a project in the UMCG, the musicians offer them a choice between three pieces. A trainee medical specialist calls out: "Ramses Shaffy, please, that's it!" Quickly, the musicians invite everyone in the room to sing along. Little do they know that the young trainee doctor is a singer, and when the chorus starts, he belts out the lyrics loudly and clearly. Violinist Paulien remembers: "When the doctor stood in the spotlights for a moment, that was really amazing." Later, the doctor asks the musicians if they would be willing to perform with him in two days at a goodbye party for a colleague.

He tells the musicians he does not want add to their workload, but they love the idea and the musicians are eager to arrange anything he would like to sing. Lou Reed's Perfect Day is picked. On the fourth day, there is a 'buzz' in the air about the upcoming surprise for the unknowing colleague. Staff gathers at the reception. Then the music starts. The performance is perfect and heartfelt, even without a rehearsal. Later, Paulien reflects: "I saw several people crying. I also had to hold in my tears. Suddenly I was in the middle of a team during a special and emotional moment." Emiel: "It did not feel as if we were musicians accompanying the doctor but it felt like we had performed with him as equals." Violist Helen adds: "this type of collaboration was new, and the most special part of it was that it just felt so natural and wasn't forced." Later on social media, the young doctor posts a clip of the moment with the caption: "I have a passion to become a good doctor. I also have a passion to sing (and to perform!). But the most beautiful thing is when sometimes you manage to combine these two."





Nurse Karen and Mr. Postma

Mr. Postma, an older male patient, is visited by the musicians every day at the UMCG. Nurse Karen, who is working every day the musicians are present that week, has a special connection with him. During each of the visits, Karen is present, even if she is not assigned to Mr. Postma that day or if she is busy with other tasks. On the last day, the musicians ask Mr. Postma what they could play for him, as a goodbye. He then asks for an improvisation. The patient says that this morning he and Karen listened to music by the Dutch singer Wende, since Karen went to a concert of her earlier this week. The man would like to hear a piece with the same feel. Clarinettist Emiel asks Karen how she would describe the music. She says: “it is a story, it has something meditative.” The musicians translate the wish into an airy, light piece. When the musicians leave the room, Karen softly starts to cry. She says that she feels very moved, and “I think I’m tired. Then the emotions hit me even harder.” She explains that with some patients she experiences a special bond, and Mr. Postma is undoubtedly one of those. “It’s great that I can experience the music together with him.”

