MUSIC MAKING MEMORIES

A MUSIC AND OBJECT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARERS AT THE GRAINGER MUSEUM
WELCOME

This booklet is a reflection on a pilot project focussing on wellbeing for people with dementia and their Carers, that was run at the Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne, in 2017.

The booklet provides an insight into our stages of development and actuation of Music making memories at the Grainger Museum. We hope it may encourage other smaller museums to create and run their own projects designed to support people with dementia and their Carers in their communities.

I really think everybody needs music in their life, whether they know it or not

- Beryl, Carer
INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Grainger Museum, the University of Melbourne ran a pilot project focussed on wellbeing for people with dementia and their Carers, utilising the diverse cultural resources of the Museum. The program simultaneously provided an opportunity for tertiary students in health-related disciplines, Music Therapy and Medicine, to apply and develop their skills in a community-based setting. The program sought to explore a new means of community and student engagement for the Grainger Museum, specifically embracing recent research that demonstrates the value of museums in the context of promoting health and wellbeing in their communities.

There were many factors that led to the development of this program. We were motivated by the growing challenges that dementia is placing on families and health systems alike, we were inspired by arts-health programs for people with dementia and their Carers that have been developing across the globe with resounding success, and finally, we aspired to create a program that enriched our local community, provided unique learning opportunities for university students, and explored and expanded on the role of museums in dementia care.

HEATHER GAUNT
Curator – The Grainger Museum
Music has meant so much, my mother was a pianist and an organist, and I remember her practicing every afternoon...you forget these memories until something is a reminder of these occasions, and that’s wonderful.

– Ethel, Participant
Dementia is a key health issue facing the Australian population. It is currently the second leading cause of death, and the greatest cause of disability in Australians over 65 years. According to the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, there are currently more than 415,000 Australians living with dementia and, as our population ages, that number is forecast to markedly increase. Furthermore, the impact of dementia has wide-reaching consequences beyond that of the patient. Projections suggest that by 2025, over 255,000 Carers will be needed in the community needed in the community sector alone to care for our friends, our family, our patients, who are affected by this disease. Overall, the total cost of dementia is predicted to increase to $18.7 billion by 2025, and expand to over $36.8 billion by 2056. As such, dementia is a large and growing public health issue in Australia. Unfortunately, despite over $60 million in research per annum in Australia alone, there is currently no cure for dementia (1).

As we know, dementia is not only a medical issue, but a social and psychological one, with wide-reaching ramifications for an individual’s wellbeing and quality of life. To tackle these complicated challenges, people are looking beyond traditional definitions of health care and into areas such as art, drama and music for innovative approaches to care. This has led to the development of novel and holistic programs which are being recognised for their potential to compliment the current scope of medical treatment. As testament to this, community-based programs for people with dementia have been developing in art galleries and museums across the world. These programs have been overwhelmingly well received, highlighting the positive effects on wellbeing and quality of life derived from social engagement, story-sharing and collaboration.

The growing burden of dementia on families and health systems both at home and abroad, combined with the complex social challenges that the disease creates and the knowledge of the unique role that the arts and cultural sectors can play in the provision of dementia care motivated us to develop this program.
...and it is lovely to see the joy on the faces of those who have dementia, they really get transported right out of their problems...just the sheer joy of singing together, it’s wonderful. It’s amazing how they remember the words, they may not even communicate verbally, but once the music starts, it’s another world, and it’s lovely to see that.

— Beryl, Carer
THE VALUE OF CULTURAL SECTOR INTERVENTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The value of the cultural sector, specifically museums and art galleries, as a setting for health interventions has been growing internationally over recent years (2,3,4). This surge in interest stems from bodies of evidence suggesting that arts-based programs decrease negative psychological and physiological symptoms of dementia, while increasing wellbeing, quality of life and self-reported health (4). This exciting research strengthens what we already know from many such programs; that community-based arts engagement programs enrich the lives of people with the dementia by adding another facet to their current medical care, and facilitating a rounded approach to health. By building upon connections between medical and arts-health bodies through the provision of holistic, wellbeing-based programs, it is hoped that people with dementia are more likely to continue living in the community for longer, and that their Carers will feel supported in their role, resulting in reduced pressure on health care systems, and a better quality of life for people with dementia (5).

Museums and art galleries are uniquely equipped to facilitate unique and positive social interactions for both people with dementia and their Carers. Museums provide a welcoming, non-stigmatising environment, and can offer tailored programs for participants from a wide variety of backgrounds (6). Furthermore, museums allow for interdisciplinary, and, at times, intergenerational collaborations, thus promoting cohesion between various arts, allied health, and medical bodies. The benefits of such programs are multifold, and it has been suggested that museums contribute to the pursuit of health in five key areas (3):

1. promoting relaxation
2. an immediate intervention of beneficial change in physiology, emotions or both
3. encouraging introspection, which can be beneficial for mental health
4. fostering health education
5. acting as public health advocates and enhancing health-care environments.

In light of this growing body of research, the Grainger Museum was inspired to create a unique program capitalising on our extensive and diverse range of cultural resources. We saw an opportunity to share the museum in a new way with our community, incorporating music, object handling and museum exploration.
Museums have taken on a flipped role, we are so much about co-creation, stories, people and the community. And so in this space, of carers and people with dementia, museums have a great role to play; a role that is very relevant to society.
– Heather, Grainger Museum Curator
Throughout the development and instigation of this program, we aspired to enrich the local community, in addition to the university student body and the museum itself.

We achieved this through leveraging the broad collections, and physical location of the Grainger Museum to be recognised as a place that enriches the cultural, intellectual, educational and social life of the City of Melbourne and Victoria. In this way, we not only increased public awareness of the opportunities inherent in cultural institutions for addressing some of the challenges of ageing, but also developed the museum into a new resource for the local community in dementia support, an area of particular and pressing need.

At the same time, the project increased expertise and experience for participating postgraduate students in health and allied health. By creating a multi-disciplinary program across medicine and music therapy, students were given an opportunity to engage in unique ways with students from various backgrounds, as well as apply their learning in a real-world setting. These experiences encouraged the students to appreciate the issues of people affected by dementia as well as understand and appreciate the perspectives and skills that students from other disciplines bring to the workshops.

And finally, for our participants, we sought to create an opportunity for them to share stories, explore the museum, and participant in a program tailored for them, that enriched and added value to their lives. Our hope was that this would enhance their sense of wellbeing, and spark their interest in similar arts-health programs.

Ultimately, our goal was to create a program that highlighted and expanded on the skills and unique attributes of all those involved; from the vast collection of the Grainger, to the stories and musical talents of the participants and the clinical knowledge and expertise of our medical and music therapy student facilitators.
It seemed like the logical thing to do. We have this wonderful environment, and the opportunity where the museum is about music...and so it had to happen. It was the perfect place for the program, for students, for the participants, and for the university reaching out and servicing the community. My great hope is now that we have established a basis, we will have more funding, expand the program and involve the next years worth of students. It's wonderful for the Grainger to open up to the community.

– Heather, Grainger Museum Curator
Our Project

There were 7 key phases in the development of the Music Making Memories at the Grainger Museum program:

1. Academic advisory group formation and planning meetings
2. Budget planning and funding application
3. Student Recruitment (UoM postgraduate Medicine and Music Therapy)
4. Session planning with the Advisors and with students
5. Participant Recruitment
6. Sessions delivery
7. Follow-up and Reflection

After developing an outline for the program, we began recruiting students from Music Therapy and the School of Medicine to work alongside us as session facilitators. We met with these students regularly to build a program structure together. We also invited a local leader in the field of arts-health dementia programs to come and speak to us about the opportunities and challenges of running programs in the area of museums and dementia, and provide insight on how to best work with this population.

We contacted local community groups, nursing homes and day centres over a period of some months, to find participants for the program. Participating in a new program like this is a big step for many people, and so it took time to find those who were willing to be the first to give it a go! After finding participants, we gathered information about the musical preferences of our participants and gave that information to the Music Therapy students to allow them to tailor the program accordingly.
While each of our sessions were different, they all followed a similar format and included singing, object handling, museum exploration and morning tea over a two-hour period. Our basic schedule was:

9:30 – 10:00: Facilitators arrive, set up chairs, organise catering, welcome and orientate facilitators
10:00 – 10:10: Welcome participants. Distribute name tags, welcome to the venue
Introduction from program coordinator
10:10 – 10:40: Welcome song where we each introduced each other, followed by choosing songs from the song book to sing together.
10:40 – 11:00: Object handling session. Hand around and discuss objects around the circle. Objects included lovingly repaired waistcoats, photographs, Grainger’s magnificent towel costumes along with a few mystery objects which provided animated discussion, story sharing from the group.
11:00 – 11:30: Museum exploration. Stretch the legs and explore the museum in small groups. Participants were asked to answer the question ‘if you could choose one object from the collection to be in your home, which would you chose, and why?’
11:30 – 12:00: Morning tea.

Grant funding allowed us to provide transport to and from the venue for our participants, pay our session facilitators for their time, and provide morning tea for each session. Morning tea proved to be a key part of the program. Having the opportunity to sit, have a cup of tea, a biscuit and talk with each other was a highlight for the participants and facilitators alike.
Of course we ended with morning tea, which was a good way to relax and catch up, and I had some really nice conversations with people about their experiences with music and finding out a little bit more about their life. It was really lovely...chatting and singing some music, it was really good fun.
- Will, Music Therapy Student
TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

1. Educate yourself!
Dementia is a complex and poorly understood condition that affects people and families in vast and unique ways. Everyone’s experience with dementia is different, and, as such, it is important for us, as program managers and facilitators to listen to the needs of the individual and respond accordingly. A core factor in the success of these types of programs is their ability to return a sense of agency, self-worth and belonging to the individual. They allow people with dementia to contribute to a social situation, and allows them and their Carers to interact on a personal level that they may have had before their diagnosis, as a mother and daughter or husband and wife, for example.

2. Be flexible
People with dementia can have changes in mood quite quickly, or they can find new situations and environments challenging. Be sure to monitor and adapt to their needs, and communicate with the Carers to ensure that everyone is safe and content. We had some people who left a little early, others who got up during the session to walk around, others who had to make last minute dates changes due to illness. It was important to go with the flow, and change the session accordingly.

3. Think outside the box
Consider the importance of flow through the space, the type of floorings, where people can leave wheelchairs and frames, how to transition from one activity to the next, what objects are suitable to be passed around - are they interesting, not too delicate, perhaps a bit mysterious...

4. Keep it simple
While we were fortunate to provide transport and payment for the program, these factors weren’t necessary to develop a program. A similarly effective program could be put on without much needing to be spent.

5. Collect feedback and reflect
The importance of this can’t be understated. Having feedback about what worked, and what didn’t from all involved is the key to improving and staying relevant within the community.
I think one of the most exciting things about a program like this, is seeing people who aren’t Music Therapists experience and engage with the process and see the kinds of amazing things that it can do.

– Emma, Music Therapy Student
Inspiration and ideas for the Grainger program came from other successful programs, including:

**Historic Royal Palaces, Sensory Palaces,**
**London:** https://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/explore/sensory-palaces

**Programs for Older People at the Dulwich Picture Gallery,**
**London:** https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/learning/older-people/

**The MoMA Alzheimer’s Project:**
http://www.moma.org/meetme/index

**The Art and Dementia Program at the National Gallery of Victoria:** https://nga.gov.au/artdementia/

Additional information was sourced from:

**National Alliance for Museums, Health & Wellbeing:**
https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com/

**The Australian Centre for Arts and Health:**
http://www.artsandhealth.org.au/
REFERENCES

MEET THE TEAM

Program Manager, Music making memories at the Grainger Museum: Dr Danielle Barry
Curator, Grainger Museum: Dr Heather Gaunt

Academic Advisory Group:
Prof Jane Davidson: Professor of Creative and Performing Arts, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. A/Prof Eleanor Flynn: Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Lena Gan, Program Director, Master of Ageing, School of Population and Global Health. Dr Grace Thompson: Lecturer Music Therapy, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Dr Jeanette Tamplin: Research Fellow, Music Therapy, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

A video of the Music Making Memories at the Grainger Museum is available on the Grainger Museum website: https://grainger.unimelb.edu.au/

Video produced by Learning Environments, University of Melbourne