

Considering the listeners in the healthcare environment

The goal of Eastman Performing Arts Medicine (EPAM) performances is to relieve anxiety by creating a welcoming environment of solace, offering emotional and spiritual inspiration and supporting the journey of healing and caregiving for all. More importantly for artists and the field of live music, EPAM performances offer a unique opportunity to showcase the value and power of music in our lives in an “emerging market” that has the potential to broaden professional opportunities for artists and audiences for live music. With these ideas in mind, effective music selection for the hospital environment is the primary key to success, while a wide variety of non-musical elements also contribute to that success.

“They (the listeners) aren’t here for you. You are here for them.” – J. Todd Frazier

The following are important guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare to submit your repertoire for consideration:

Who is in the audience? At any time, Strong Memorial Hospital (SMH) public spaces have patients waiting to be admitted, current patients, and those who have been discharged. These individuals are experiencing various levels of physical discomfort, emotional discomfort and stress. In addition to patients, there are family members, doctors, nurses, residents, medical students, volunteers, administrators, visitors and more who see the public spaces as a comfortable and inviting area to spend time and an escape from work and life related anxiety or stress. The aim is to support this environment through music. Therefore, **music selection, instrumentation and volume** are key components to ensuring success.

What makes this venue unique? The lobby spaces at SMH are where thousands of people pass through each day and an important location for the business of the hospital. It offers a unique performance environment as the **audience members are primarily “unintentional”** audience members. Even though most people do not come to the hospital expecting a performance, they do find themselves grateful for the welcoming and inspiring environment. Some guests will sit for the entire performance, but the large majority of guests will stand, be engaged while walking by, or choose to participate from afar. The majority of the **guests will be engaged from 1-5 minutes**. Some guests may walk near or even through performance areas speaking on the phone or presenting behavior that would not occur in traditional venues. Occasionally guests may offer feedback or clap at times, and recognizing their feedback is appropriate. The environment can be noisy – announcements and sounds may occur while you are playing. Artists are asked to adjust to and **embrace this “nontraditional” environment**.

How do I approach programming for the hospital environment? It is very common for individuals in the health care setting to be in a state of heightened anxiety. Music can be a remedy to reduce anxiety by **providing solace** (defined as: comfort or consolation in a time of distress or sadness). Support through music may also offer emotional and spiritual inspiration and strength to continue a path of healing, service and caregiving. Additionally, music can offer an escape and diversion.

Programming your repertoire for the healthcare environment

Music should appeal to all audiences. Wide varieties of musical genres are well-received and provide support in hospital environments, although certain parameters consistently prove useful in guiding musical selection:

Effective

Tonal, diatonic, pentatonic
(dissonance expressed within frame of tonality)

Contained dynamic range

Light and uplifting music

Short works

Early music, Baroque, Classical

Folk music, spirituals, hymns

Classical music from movies and shows

Great "American Songbook" (as instrumental)

Not recommended

Atonal, dissonant languages

Sudden loud sounds

Loud overall dynamics

Intense rhythmic activity

Extended sections of dissonance

Vocal music/lyrics