

Striking a Chord: Dementia and Song

Prabhjot Parmar and Nirmal Puwar

We have co-written this piece to relay what can be achieved with song and music in familial and non-familial settings when caring for a person with dementia. This article started as a conversation we had in the Wellcome Collection cafe in London to catch up with each other while Prabhjot was en route from Canada to India, to meet her father. We shared how dementia was becoming a part of our parents' lives. Both of us have been drawn to understanding how our own performance of song with our respective parent enabled both them and us to maintain a register of connection. Song became a means of trying to keep striking a parental and musical chord. We both aimed to connect by engendering 'therapeutic atmospheres' (Sonntag 2016) through song. We use song and music interchangeably, operating with performance as an umbrella term that includes gesture, utterance, dance, singing and playing musical instruments, for example.

Much of the field of dementia studies is held hostage to what is considered to be robust science. However, experiments often merely verify what can be observed in case studies of families trying to connect with and care for loved ones with dementia. This was evident, for instance, in the observations of a daughter connecting and communicating with her mother in advanced dementia by repeating back non-word sounds and touch (Moser 2011).

Two autoethnographic relational contributions provide a substantive basis to our article, each written by a researcher-carer-daughter, seeking to sustain contact with what remains in her parent living with dementia.

This article is dedicated to the chords Prabhjot Parmar has struck with her father, Major Harbhajan Singh (25 Dec 1925 – 16 April 2018) and Nirmal Puwar has had the pleasure of sharing with her mother, Kartar Kaur.

Connecting Through Music

A range of international and local initiatives have instituted music as a practice of care and therapy in dementia: singing for the Brain in the UK and Memory and Music in the United States and Canada, for example.^{[note]1} It has been widely recognized that elements of music memory remain even in the advanced stages of dementia; and the bonds formed with songs from a young age continue to be recognized. Music can arouse surrogate emotions hard-wired in the neural apparatus of the brain (Clark and Warren 2015). There is a rich attachment to musical memories (Omar et al. 2010). Hearing personally specific music can arouse involuntary autobiographical memory. It is often noted that while episodic memory deteriorates with dementia, procedural memory can remain. Music itself is stored in procedural memory, which is associated with repetitive and muscle memory. The rhythm, melody or beat of music contains movement. The mnemonic power of 'music may allow an ability to organize, to follow intricate sequences, or to hold great volumes of information in the mind' (Sacks 2008: 257). Because music works across the neural networks of the brain, participation in singing can also boost overall cognitive improvement, making it even possible to enhance new memory formation through singing (Simmons-Stern et al. 2010). This article furthers an understanding of how music presents us with a resource for tapping into what remains, as a route to expanding our repertoires for connecting with those touched by dementia.

Performing music, David Aldridge argues, involves 'a dynamic cycle of activity' of 'making and listening' (2005b: 11). In a similar fashion, Jan Sonntag treats music as 'part of being human that focuses on hearing and action' (2016: 222). Through giddha^{[note]2} a daughter (Nirmal) uses popular hand-clapping boliyan^{[note]3} to engage her mother, who not only listens and watches, but also participates -- both clapping and singing, even if intermittently. Singing songs and playing harmonium and recorded music, on the other hand, help a daughter (Prabhjot) to trigger responses from her father, who utters lyrics, sings and gesticulates despite the rapid progression of Alzheimer's. Both Nirmal and Prabhjot employ song as a strategy to elicit responses, with 'hearing' leading to 'action'. In so doing, both as daughters-caregivers reach for chords that remain with their respective parent. Giddha as a song and dance social

activity becomes central for Nirmal and her mother, playing harmonium and recorded music and singing as social and communal activities for Prabhjot and her father. In both cases, rhythmic movement and songs become means of providing care in close proximity. Prabhjot also uses ‘technology as a form of connectivity’ (Francisco-Menchavez 2018: 4) from her diasporic location in Canada to sing or play recorded music/videos to her father. If dance is a ‘powerful medium for cultural and personal expression’ and rhythm ‘the basis of music in changing states of consciousness’ (Aldridge 2005b: 11), then, both Nirmal’s and Prabhjot’s respective parent experiences the ‘making’ of music, along with gestures.

Archives of Song: Mother and Daughter (Nirmal Puwar)

Song even as voice alone has gesture in it, as words carry an affective quality. There is a materiality to words, with words being gestural (Motamedi Fraser 2015). Words themselves have a tonal and rhythmic musicality to them, which only those accustomed to relaying and practising the ways in which they have been heard are able to repeat in affective performative engagements. There is a life behind words (Das 2007), in their tempo and affective registers. In times of illness, which impacted my mum’s vascular dementia, I would repeat, in song, a few phrases from the archive of words she used humorously. For example, Motta Puttla (Fatty and Skinny) was her way of referring to Laurel and Hardy. Just saying Motta Puttla could arouse laughter in her, helping to enhance her mood. Physical action with the words further orchestrates the performative contact zones of what remains in her memories through the touching qualities of the musicality of words and phrases.

Using boliyan singing and gesturing with my mother took us both back to the atmospheres of social interaction of giddha we shared in post-war Britain, as well to my mother’s time in India before migration. These enactments took us back to when women from the Punjab in the South Asian diaspora used to regularly erupt into song and dance at social gatherings or special occasions together, as was often the case at weddings and parties. Space for these practices has very much been eroded by the predominance of the DJ. Indeed, my mother was known for her jovial party spirit and

love of spurring women to enact giddha together. More often than not, this included such everyday social occasions as relatives visiting each other. Thus, she would enthusiastically urge a cluster of young girls who were visiting, even if it was only the next-door neighbours, to break out into giddha together in the living room. In giddha, one or two women take the lead, in a circle formation, speaking and singing the boli, while those in the circle sing the chorus and clap to the beat of the two leads' dancing. The dance steps not only involve the feet, but also the arms, as well as hand gestures and facial expressions. A range of objects -- sticks, scarves, drums, spoons -- depending on what is to hand, become material participants (see Marres 2012). The play with these objects imitated their usual usage in the partly impromptu choreography during the giddha dance-song-talk-beat. Boliyan range from sad laments of loss and longing to risqué, often overt, sexual innuendo, with lively actions. The repertoire of boliyan as social commentaries on life that are passed down performatively is vast. They are sung in couplets, as expressions of transformative as well as everyday situations. My knowledge of giddha and boliyan was transmitted to within these social encounters; indeed, it has been intergenerationally and performatively acquired. Though my own repertoire is fragmented and limited, I tend to enact the more jovial and humorous boliyan with my mother, in order to lift the atmospheric mood for both of us. Our re-enactments recreate the emotive energies of these gatherings. For instance, I clap to:

Babe de tal paa deo, Babe de tal paa deo.

Beray ch kharakda aaway, O tal paa deo.

(Place a bell on granddad, Place a bell on him.

So that you can hear his rattling sounds when he enters the courtyard.)

My mother joins in by clapping and/or by singing all or some of the phrases. This short boli brings smiles and laughter to the exchanges between daughter and mother. The mode of communication hails a form of banter through song and enacts moments of therapeutic atmospheres for both, within a wider context of anxiety, paranoia, loss and withdrawal, as states of being in dementia. Songs become a resource for learning how

to maintain relationships between mother and daughter. Song and associated movements become a way of being together by reconnecting with what remains through fragments of performative re-enactments.

Diana Taylor (2003) has noted how cultural memory is an active archival canon that is continuously being rebuilt performatively. Paul Connerton (1989) refers to two modes with reference to how societies remember: scriptural memory and performative memory. Different media platforms are now part of what we can refer to as 'the scribe', as modes of recording. While the words of boliyan, as a predominantly oral tradition, can be found in written form and in recorded music or videos, the performative enactment of boliyan in giddha, as experienced by my mother, is transmitted in situ. Film recordings of giddha, as performed by women, are widely available on the internet; the great majority comprise giddha dance performances for staged competitions that occur across India and the diaspora. These, however, are far removed from the knowledge I need to tap into for the songs and motions that remain with my mother. Boliyan have also been recorded on albums by female Punjabi performers, but even these are modified versions that exist in a format that is unlike the impromptu giddha performances my mother has been accustomed to. The boliyan captured in the vastly popular bhangra music industry, dominated by men, is even more remote from the giddha my mother would recognize. Alternative archival research has become necessary to expand knowledge of the very specific body, voice and group performances of my mother's time. My mum is able to connect with some of the emotions which ensued during numerous giddha sessions she participated in during the past. Importantly, some of the good feelings from these social interactions emerge in the engagement of daughter and mother. If more people participate, such as my sister, then the feelings become even more pronounced as the group dynamics of giddha come into play -- with multiple hands clapping, voices singing and bodies gesturing through dance.

It is widely recognized in the field of dementia and music that a playlist of songs and music an individual listened to in their life, especially between the ages of ten to thirty, can be a vital knowledge resource for an informed approach towards connecting with what remains. In my case, the playlist relies on my own remembering of giddha encounters from my childhood. In addition, it is possible for me to seek out social

occasions where giddha is performed in a similar fashion to what my mother was accustomed to in familial settings. Giddha was commonplace at weddings, but in the UK it has largely been superseded by a male-dominated, DJ music system. Thus, now in order to make a compilation of giddha recordings, as daughter-researcher I have to operate more like an ethnographer, looking for events where giddha gatherings might take place in the UK. With an emphasis on recording to remember, as a daughter I have to become a documentary participant. I could also search for an archive of private wedding video and cine footage of giddha at weddings in the post-war UK.

There is an overarching feeling of loss associated with dementia. This only intensified as the condition develops, albeit with variations in the progression not least of all due to the plasticity of the brain and the differential impact of other co-morbidities. Within the wider field of care there is a weight of resignation attached to living with dementia (Waller and Beeharee 2002). We are emphasising, as are other scholars in critical dementia studies, that while connecting and sharing experiences do become extremely challenging, it is also possible to live well in dementia, especially because while death does extend into life, as described by the commonplace notion of 'continuous bereavement', life also extends into death (Moser 2011)

As the illness descended on my mother, few relatives, especially those outside the immediate family, came to visit. One elderly female relative my mother had known for over forty years was most disappointed when my mother could not remember her. That relative remarked to me, 'She is not here; she is just a trace of what she was.' I wished that I had a way of circumventing the weight of visitors' gloom by educating them to understand that much remains, if only people knew how to connect with my mother's neurologically challenging situation. The songs the elderly relative could sing, no doubt better than I could, keeping the tempo, tone and pronunciations recognized by my mother, would have produced a more life-affirming situation. But this could only happen if the relative could withhold judgement and learn to recognize and follow the chords of what remained in my mother.

In 2018 my mother's health reached a critical point, whereby her waking minutes from sleep were few and far between, partly due to a careless drug regime administered to her in hospital after an epileptic seizure, as well as an unwillingness by hospital doctors

to investigate the metabolic issues impacting on her awareness. Two female relatives from my mother's maternal family, of whom she was very fond, travelled some distance to see her in hospital, in case these were her final days. Initially, they were delighted when she opened her eyes for them, as she had not done so for other relatives who had travelled to see her. But then they were unsure of how to communicate with her in her drowsy state, so I informed them that my mother liked to hear and sing bolian. In unison, and with much more accuracy in their tone than I could deliver, they began to sing, while tapping my mother's chest gently in rhythm with:

Babe de tal paa deo, Babe de tal paa deo.

Beray ch kharakda aaway, O tal paa deo.

(Place a bell on granddad, Place a bell on him.

So that you can hear his rattling sounds when he enters the courtyard. Place a bell on him).

[Insert this film link <https://vimeo.com/318394308>]

My mother responded with a fine smile and a glow in her face, which showed them how much she liked celebratory songs, especially those with some humorous action in the descriptions. They sang a little more. My mother could hear the cheer in their voices as they sang some lines from a wedding bolian that women sing as significant members from each side of the wedding party embrace each other and exchange garlands. During this milni (meeting) ceremony, which has been modulated across space and time, early in the morning relatives from each side meet their opposite number: for instance, the mother of the bride meets the mother of the groom; the paternal aunts from each side meet and so on. Many of the bolian involve each side cheekily goading one another. Thus, there is an air of jovial banter in the performance of milni. Sitting next to my mother's bedside in hospital, the two female relatives sang and joked :

Male Hooa Maharaj, Mela Milne Da,

Milne Da

Male Hooa Maharaj Mela Milne Da.

Chacha Hooa Tyaar, Mela Milne Da.

Milne Da.

Lumba Hoke Sit Ve, Chaura Hoke Sit Ve.

(This is a meeting Maharaj of the Milne.

This is a meeting Maharaj of the Milne.

The paternal uncle has got ready, for the meeting of the Milne.

Become tall and throw him, Become wide and throw him.)

In these exchanges, my mother is not simply reminded of words in a song but she is also taken back to the fun and effrontery of the social gathering and occasion. Thus, this is not a private song she is fond of, compiled from a private archive or playlist collection. Rather, it lives in between the bodies and voices that perform in situ and in concert. This boli indexes the gestural and affective play of this particular ceremony. The words and actions of event-specific memory crystallize in the words, tone and movement of the boli. The communal aspect of singing with actions, however minimal, such as tapping my mother's chest, in time with the song, brings the person with dementia into the force field of sonic and social relations in a totally different way than simply turning on a music system would (McGuire). Besides, as noted by Anthony Storr in Music and the Mind (1992), a primary function of music is collective and communal, a way of bringing people together. This is probably the most uplifting and life-affirming element of the care one receives and gives at a hospital bedside -- a gift of exchange. An activity we need to see and hear more of, especially in the misery of geriatric wards, where if there is recovery at all, it is slow.

It has often been noted in dementia studies that songs can be especially helpful in difficult moments of personal care, such as bathing, dressing and eating. For instance, in her memoir Sally Magnusson (2015), the daughter of Mastermind television presenter Magnus Magnusson, notes how songs were part of being together as a family. And it was specific songs she resorted to when she needed to transition her mum living with dementia both into and out of the bath. With the onset of advanced dementia, encouraging people to eat can be difficult. Song has become a device for encouraging

my mother to eat. Indeed, in hospital, I deploy boliyan to prompt eating. One particularly effective song form, sitthniyan,^{[note]4} was from the nankishak^{[note]5} at a wedding:

Asi bhooke baithay, thoda rotiian nu aggay toar.

Asi bhukhe baithay.

(We are sitting hungry, send some food quickly.

We are famished.)

At Punjabi weddings, the nankishak offers the chance to make bold remarks and performative demands on the paternal side, in good humour. The boli mentioned above is the one my mother used to sing with verve if there was the slightest delay in serving drinks whenever we went as nankishak. In hospital, when it was often near impossible to get her to eat, I discovered that this boli proved to be invaluable. Unlike at the communal gatherings my mother was used to, social activity is now reduced to a performing duo of a mother and her daughter, where the latter, as a caregiver, tries to reach out to what remains through song. I have started to draw on songs to encourage my mum to eat as it becomes a daily mission to get food and fluids down her. The following boli brings a smile to my mum's face as we coax her to take some fluids. It is often sung by women in giddha, as they gesture drinking alcohol, with an arm and thumb raised to signify a bottle, while they stand upright

Aaj Koot Peeni Ar, Peeni Ar Tekhe Dara, Aaj Koot Peeni Ar

(Today we are going to have a gulp of a drink, we are going to drink alcohol merchandise supplier [implied as male], Today we are going to have a gulp of a drink)

Song to the End: Father and Daughter (Prabhjot Parmar)

The 'remembering of personally experienced events' (Tulving 1985: 3) is situated in a context, setting -- time, place and atmosphere -- and association that have always fascinated me. From a young age, I started asking my parents questions about their

past; then, as an adult, I began recording some of their life stories. Many of my questions would focus on films and songs eliciting responses that often became portals to other memories. In 1993, I immigrated to Canada; however, the process of questions and personal histories continued during my visits home to India, over long-distance phone conversations and, more recently, through mobile technologies. Consequently, along with my own memories, I carry those of my parents in a collage sutured by events, people and songs. While the convenience and value of using an audio device for recording was obvious at that time, the importance of these recordings only became apparent much later. In 2006, noticeable hints of confusion, behavioural changes and short-term memory loss in my father, who is the focus of this section of the article, became a concern; he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Now, the man who had so effortlessly described his childhood in meticulous detail, the man who had vividly detailed his life in the military during the Second World War, and the man who had lovingly narrated stories of my childhood and those of my siblings was slowly being robbed of these and other memories.

The prospect of erasure of memories due to Alzheimer's can be traumatic for both the sufferer and the caregiver; my father and I were no different. As the extent of his confusion and disorientation manifested itself, he often remarked: 'I think I am going crazy' or 'I am losing my mind.' In hindsight, the poignancy of these comments is palpable as, he would go on to forget almost everything that he remembered. Numerous conversations and audio recordings made over the years now emerged as a corpus of memories to draw from in order to interact with my father and make him feel comfortable, especially through songs. Framing questions and asking him for more details over the years had allowed me to remember many of his memories, which have become part of my experiences by proxy. My memories also contain my father's autobiographical memories thus creating, if you will, a repository of meta autobiographical memories dominated by music and song. For me these memories became a site from which to operate and create an 'intersubjective experience' (Candida Smith 2003: 17) engaging voice, gesture and music, including by playing harmonium. The sound and feel of the musical instrument were associated with fond and exciting memories.

In 1947, a British soldier in my father's regiment gifted him the harmonium that my father used to play. Since then, it has had a prominent place in our music-loving family. In the early stages of Alzheimer's, my father was able to play it and sing without forgetting notes or lyrics, and share some harmonium-singing related anecdotes. Sadly, his ability to play it diminished with his deteriorating health; however, the materiality of this vintage instrument served as a source not only of music but also episodic memories that produced performative actions. In addition, this harmonium functioned as a signifier of his youth. Even in his advanced state of cognitive impairment (in December 2017), my father could recognize his harmonium when shown a photograph of him playing it at the age of twenty. The old photograph and the tactility of the material harmonium provided a sense of security to him in knowing that his favourite instrument was very much there physically. When visiting him, I would always entertain my father by playing his harmonium and singing his favourite songs. During such musical moments, my father, to borrow from Oliver Sacks, 'reacquired his identity for a while through the power of music' (Rossato-Bennett_2014). Furthermore, the aurality of the harmonium contributed to creating pleasurable surroundings that aided in providing him comfort.

Music 'possesses atmospheric qualities like no other medium' (Sonntag 2016: 220) and 'well known melodies ... possess the capacity to revive the past' (Fuchs 2012: 19). The atmosphere influenced by music acquires the qualities of 'Therapeutic Atmospheres' that Sonntag defines as 'a resonating space making it possible to be aware of oneself and to experience well-being in the perceptible presence of others but without pressure' (2016: 223). My father, whose fingers once danced on a harmonium as he sang a variety of songs, was being slowly robbed of his musical memories. I offered musical segments to him creating 'Therapeutic Atmospheres' in which familiar sonic elements, together with 'material and social environments' (Sonntag 2016) functioned in harmony making him feel relaxed and comfortable. The love of music that my father shared with and instilled in me over the years now helped me in sharing his life with him by returning his memories to 'help bring him back to his memories' (Rossato-Bennett 2014). In a way, I was remembering for him, particularly through his favourite songs, which helped create an emotionally meaningful and comfortable soundscape -- an 'atmosphere' in which the aesthetic and the personal came together. Known film or non-film songs and

*ghazals*⁶ and rhymes and poetry sung to specific tunes in Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi helped to connect him with his musical memories and his past, even if momentarily. By playing harmonium or recorded music, or by singing songs in his room, I was not performing art, but performing memories for my father. Sometimes he remembered (recollection of both song and the setting) and at other times, divorced from the context, he only knew (feeling of familiarity) about the song. While it was difficult to discern these differences through his gestures and limited utterances, post-listening conversations related to the song helped determine his responses in relation to 'remembering/knowing' or 'recollection/familiarity' (Yonelinas 2002). Nonetheless, his pleasure was evident through gestures, singing and, on occasion, comments indicating that the 'atmosphere' had indeed contributed to his well-being. At times, gestures manifested as embodiment of memory communicating pleasure and sensory recollection through song.

My father's sensorial experience anchored firmly to songs sung to specific tunes drew out memories of hand movements to precise rhythms as per Hindustani classical ragas. Listening to and enjoying Hindustani music often compels one to move one's head in swaying rhythmic patterns or in short quick movements; both are also complemented by rhythmic gestures where hand movements symbolize certain musical beats and movements and/or complement specific lyrics. Besides 'evolved dispositions', body memory forms 'the memory cores that connect us most intimately with our biographical past' (Fuchs 2012: 20). Furthermore, elaborating on musical gestures -- 'energetic shaping through time' -- Robert Hatten (2004: 93) claims that these are 'grounded in human affect and its communication'. During extended phone conversations, I would often hear my father's caregiver call from the background: 'He is listening. He is moving his head and his hand.' My father's performative action could be read as one communicating his pleasure. Simultaneously, it could be the performance of an action retrieved from his implicit musical memories leading to a movement that his body could still remember. Either way, communication devices functioned as conduits to, and carriers of, his memories.

The intervention of technology -- recordings on tape or digitally, photographs, videos and living our lives online -- 'forever tether[s] us to all our past actions' (Bleeker 2012:

1). Taking Bleeker's statement into consideration, I suggest that the usage of technology too binds my father's memories with mine. In so doing, much like 'postmemory' (Hirsch 2008), I am reminded of many of the events and actions from my father's life. 'One person's memory is another person's archive' (Candida Smith 2003: 16). In the case of my father, song was an integral part of his 'memory' and 'archive'. When recalling specific songs from the late 1930s or early 1940s, my father often identified where he was when he watched a film or when he first listened to a song. Recalling an event, then, is also reconnecting to an emotional response experienced originally. If the 'musical long-term memory provides considerable connections to listeners' autobiographical pasts' (Tillman et al. 2010: 377), then, it also contributes to 'emotionally meaningful experience' (McDermott et al. 2014: 711). The 'archive' of what I had learnt and absorbed as a daughter emerged as a source for pulling fragments to offer my father as his memories and to continue to create 'Therapeutic Atmospheres' (Sonntag 2016). Different words, narratives, persons, places or events served as clues for him to reach and retrieve what was slowly vanishing from his memory. In particular, songs, rhymes and poetry -- both recorded or spoken in a lyrical manner -- proved to be sources that appealed to my father. It is not surprising since he could sing and play harmonium and had entertained family, friends and fellow soldiers over a span of eight decades.

The implicit musical memories that remain embedded in the long-term or procedural memory became the means to reach out to my father. Whereas he responded to a few things, it was songs that elicited the most animated responses. Along with singing lines or words, his memory of specific gestures associated with rhythm brought him alive. The wiping of significant portions of his memory slate made it a challenge to strike a chord. Nevertheless, by repeating what had happened, on occasion, added to his newer memories; he could recall some truncated details or words of what had been shared repeatedly by way of a song and its importance in his life. By narrating parts of his memories to him and by linking these to specific songs, a palimpsest was being created, even if briefly. In so doing, I was 'inscribing memories into [his] individual and [our family's] collective memory' (Bleeker 2012: 2). Our familial memories now include

our father singing songs or responding to specific songs. Songs allowed us to recall as well as create memories to carry with us.

As my father's Alzheimer's progressed, I assumed the role of a daughter-researcher to enquire into how to provide certain aspects of care so that he could find something familiar in an increasingly unfamiliar, Alzheimer's affected perception. Among other things, my location and employment in Canada limited my visits to be with him.

Telephone and mobile technologies -- iPad (FaceTime), cellphone (WhatsApp) and YouTube -- offered opportunities to meet virtually and/or play his favourite songs to engage him transnationally. Technology allowed me to 'overcome the hurdles of time and space' (Francisco-Menchavez 2018: 26) and offer/monitor care and assess the condition of my father. Virtual meetings undergirded the strength and quality of the relationship that I had with him and demonstrated the need to sustain connectivity in order to 'narrow the physical gaps' and 'be present from afar' (Francisco-Menchavez 2018: 17; 26). By late 2017, I had noted a rapid downturn in my father's condition. His fairly robust verbal engagement over the phone or mobile devices had been reduced to short phrases or monosyllables. I tried to engage with him by playing songs and through conversations that had developed a familiar repetitive pattern. Typically, an Alzheimer's patient asks the same questions or comments repeatedly due to cognitive impairment. Repeating responses to questions that my father used to ask again and again -- sometimes five to ten times within a span of few minutes -- seemed to offer him a level of security and comfort, as did playing familiar songs:

'Daddy, would you like to listen to Sehgal's songs?'

Often, he said 'Yes' and rarely, 'No'. As he would listen to songs over the phone, I would always pause the music to ask if he was tired; most of the time he wanted the songs to continue. Some of the songs served as stimuli. For example, Sehgal's ever popular hit from 1937 'Ek bangla bane nyaraa' (A unique house is built) almost always led to my father singing/reciting the next line: 'Rahay kunbaa jisme saraa' (in which the entire family will live). Such songs prompted not only recollection of lyrics but also performative action and affective response. His animated state stimulated gestures rooted in Hindustani classical and film music. Each time I sang in a rhythmic pattern, he appeared to enjoy it and, mostly, joined in to sing a song or a rhyme. Even during a

state of severe cognitive impairment, the glint of recognition and pure joy of listening to some of his favourite songs was made obvious through his performative utterances and gestures. Thus, his physical inability to move and verbal passivity were made secondary by performance activity induced by song. ^[note]8

The changing state of his memory was visible as he transformed from a proficient harmonium player to a person who wanted to but could not remember how to play it. Both frail physical health and dementia prevented him from moving his right-hand fingers dextrously on the keys while squeezing bellows with his left hand to produce melodious, soulful or foot-tapping music. As a daughter, it was heartbreaking for me to see my father unable to play music; at the same time, I knew that music would allow some communication, however limited. At times, as I played the harmonium, the very first note aroused a response of pleasure in my father: 'A-ha, wah, wah!' ('Wow, bravo!') In tandem with the exclamation his hand would move in a distinctive manner reflecting the tempo of the song. His thumb and fingertips would come together then part company in a swift downward movement indicating the profound or sublime nature of a verse. Yet again, 'listening' to familiar sounds led to 'making' (Aldridge 2005b); that is, music led to a performative action giving sounds of familiar songs 'expressive meaning' (Hatten 2004: 93). There appeared to be layers of responses ranging from subtle facial gestures to flamboyant movements of hands and arms that were often accompanied by my father's attempts at vocalizing his affective response. On occasion, he listened without uttering a single word as I played his favourite songs either in person, or over the telephone, or on mobile devices; however, his gestural engagement was rarely missing.

My father fell critically ill on 8 April 2018. At the ICU of the Military Hospital where he was admitted, a white board on the wall behind his bed identified him as Major Harbhajan Singh (Retd.), and his medical condition: septicaemia and altered sensorium, the latter reflecting a change in his cognitive function. During strictly regulated visits to my father's bedside, I would speak and sing to him; and he would respond by squeezing my hand. In the sterile environment of the ICU, it was impossible to create an 'atmosphere' in which, among other elements, soundscape could contribute to his

comfort. Under such constraints, I could create only a semblance of a familiar soundscape through singing, albeit, softly in his ear, his favourite devotional verses, songs and ghazals to offer him some reassurance that those he was familiar with were nearby. Despite being close to death my father's musical memories did not abandon him; in fact, song and singing generated some limited response even in his fragile state, and he momentarily opened his eyes upon listening to a familiar song. Whether it was Noor Jehan's 1945 hit 'Bulbulo mat ro yahan' (O, nightingale, weep not here) or Zeenat Begum's 1941 'Udd ja bholeya pancchiya' (Fly away, innocent lark), songs and poems that I sang resonated with him at some level. My father passed away on 16 April less than an hour after I had sung into his ear for the final time. Instead of the familiar performative utterances and gestures, the sound of his shallow breathing and the electronic beeping accompanying the visual patterns of his faint heartbeat on the monitor, while indicative of a finite corporeal rhythm, turned out to be his final musical performance.

Concluding Remarks

Undoubtedly much is lost in dementia. This article, *Striking a Chord*, focuses on the practices of pulling on the chords that remain through re-enactments of song, gesture, word and music. We emphasize the possibilities for staying connected through procedural memory, as well associated neural networks. Families and carers can be facilitated to value and work with what remains through song. This requires an excavation of histories of music, specific to individuals and collectivities. While some playlists are widely available through recorded and digital music, others are mediated orally and informally through intergenerational gatherings requiring a different process of knowledge production. There are further challenges to this search in a diasporic or transnational context.

Participation in singing and gesture requires a very different labour of care than simply pressing a button to play a pre-recorded song list. The interactive element of singing

entails a back-and-forth of listening, repeating, mirroring and adjusting. To keep in time with chords that may no longer be recognized, one has to listen intimately and engage closely, especially as dementia progresses and changes with time. In an increasingly globalized world, technology can help families maintain contact through voice and visuals transnationally, although the tactility of touch from in-situ encounters is often lost through spatial distance. The dialogic back-and-forth of being in the flesh, and with objects together, carries the most benefit for lives and relations.

Singing and dementia presents enormous possibilities for care. The practices of connectivity with song and music need to be shared and aired much more widely, so that they can be understood and translated into a variety of settings, with multi-scalar proportions: from the familial home setting, through institutions and larger organizations to global relations facilitated via media technologies. However, the possibilities also pose challenges to the current configurations of care. There are, for instance, millions of patients joylessly stuck in elder care wards and care homes. Thus, how can we bring singing to these organizations without it being delivered on an ad-hoc basis, as it is now? Simultaneously, how can the care sector facilitate the knowledge and skills in families and carers to understand how to re-enact singing situations in small everyday intimate encounters. The joyous implications of striking a chord with song and music are too profound to ignore.

Notes

1 These social organizations facilitate gatherings where music and singing take centre stage as a life-enhancing activity for people and their carers living with dementia.

2 Punjabi folk dance rooted in folk song and orature.

3 A boli is a couplet in Punjabi that is sung to a specific tune by women when performing giddha, a folk dance. Singing of bolis is accompanied by clapping as per the tempo of a boli. Passed down generations, these couplets cover a range of subjects: love and longing, greetings, entreaties, complaints, seasons, etc. Boliyan is a series of bolis -- couplets -- sung in succession.

4 A folk form using couplets full of wit and sarcasm sung to rhythmic tunes by women taunting or throwing insults, chiefly at menfolk. The teasing nature of the lyrics can be crude, with usage of some swear words and, at times, overt references to sex to taunt the other side -- bride's or groom's, maternal or paternal families, for example.

5 The maternal grandparents of the bride or groom, who are expected to come laden with gifts.

6 A popular form of lyric poetry often sung to classical and semi-classical raga-based music. The list of Hindustani popular and film ghazal singers of yesteryears include Kundan Lal Sehgal, Noor Jehan, Mohammed Rafi, Talat Mehmood and Suraiya.

7 Kundan Lal Sehgal, an eminent singer-actor of pre-Partition Hindustani cinema, continues to enjoy popularity.

8 Considering it 'active and dynamic' Aldridge uses performance metaphor in his study of health (2005a: 27).

References

Aldridge, David (2005a) 'Gesture and Dialogue: Music Therapy as Praxis Aesthetics and Embodied Hermeneutic' in David Aldridge (ed) Music Therapy and Neurological Rehabilitation: Performing Health, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 27-38.

Aldridge, David (2005b) 'Music, consciousness and altered states', in David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner (eds) Music and Altered States: Consciousness, Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 1--14.

Bleeker, Maaike (2012) 'Introduction: On technology & memory', Performance Research 17(3): 1--7, DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2012.696851.

Cándida Smith, Richard (2003) 'Introduction: Performing the Archive', in Art and the Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gestures of Recollection, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 15--22. E-book accessed via University of the Fraser Valley Library, 29 March 2018

Clark, Camilla, and Jason Warren (2015) 'Music, memory and mechanisms in Alzheimer's disease', *Brain* 138(8): 2122--5.

Connerton, Paul (1989) How Societies Remember, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Das, Veena (2007) Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Francisco-Menchavez, Valerie (2018) The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in the Digital Age, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Fuchs, Thomas (2012) 'The phenomenology of body memory', in Sabine C. Koch, Thomas Fuchs, Michella Summa and Cornelia Muller (eds) Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 9--22.

Hatten, Robert S. (2004) Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne (2008) 'The generation of postmemory', Poetics Today 29(1) (March): 103--28.

Marres, Noortje (2012) Material Participation: Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McDermott, Orii, Martin Orrell and Hanne Mette Ridder (2014) 'The importance of music for people with dementia: The perspectives of people with dementia, family carers, staff and music therapists', Aging & Mental Health 18(6): 706--16.

Maguire Linda, Patricia Wanschura, Marjorie Battaglia, Stefanie Howell and Jane Flinn (2014), 'Participation In Active Singing Over A 4-Month Period Leads To Cognitive

Improvements In A Group of Patients with Dementia', Journal of the American Geriatrics Society 63(4):815-6.

Sally Magnusson (2015) Where Memories Go: Why Dementia Changes Everything, London: Two Roads.

Motamedi Fraser, Mariam (2015) Word: Beyond Language, Beyond Image, London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Moser, Ingunn (2011) 'Dementia and the Limits to Life: Anthropological Sensibilities, STS Interferences, and Possibilities for Action in Care', Science, Technology and Human Values 36 (5): 704-722.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1956) Thus Spake Zarathustra, New York: Viking Press.

Omar, Rohani, Julia Hailstone, Jane Warren, Sebastian Crutch and Jason Warren (2010) 'The cognitive organization of music knowledge: A clinical analysis', Brain 133(4): 1200–13.

Rossato-Bennett, Michael (director) (2014) Alive Inside: A Story of Music and Memory [film], Projector Media and The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, United States.

Sacks, Oliver (2008) Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain, London: Picador.

Simmons-Stern, Nicholas, Andrew Budson and Brandon Ally (2010) 'Music as a memory enhancer in patients with Alzheimer's Disease', Neuropsychologia 48(10): 3164--7.

Sonntag, Jan (2016) 'Atmosphere -- An aesthetic concept in music therapy with dementia', Nordic Journal of Music Therapy 25(3): 216--28.

Storr, Anthony (1992) Music and the Mind, New York: The Free Press.

Taylor, Diana (2003) The Archive and the Repertoire, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tillman, Barbara, Isabelle Peretz and Severine Samson (2010) 'Neurocognitive approaches to memory in music: Music is memory', in Suzanne Nalbantian, Paul

M. Matthews and James L. McClelland (eds) The Memory Process: Neuroscientific and Humanistic Perspectives, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Tulving E. (1985) 'Memory and consciousness' Canadian Psychology 26: 1—12.

Waller, Diane, and Kamal Beeharee (2002) 'Changing the context of care: Opening up the system', in Diane Waller (ed.) Arts Therapies and Progressive Illness: Nameless Dread, Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

Yonelinas, Andrew P. (2002) 'The nature of recollection and familiarity: A review of 30 years of research', Journal of Memory and Language 46(3): 441--517.