

**NAME**

72 - Carol Rosenstein

---

**DATE**

June 4, 2020

**DURATION**

33m 40s

**4 SPEAKERS**

Carol Rosenstein

Peter Bowes

Gene

Diana

**START OF TRANSCRIPT****[00:00:00] Carol Rosenstein**

Everyone is high on life at the close of a concert because of what the music is doing to everybody. We talk about exercise we talk about good diet, we talk about eight hours of sleep and how much water you need to drink all day. And I think on this list of how to stay young and forestall the aging process, I think we're going to have to add music in capital letters.

**[00:00:37] Peter Bowes**

Hello and welcome to a Live Long and Master Aging podcast. I'm Peter Bowes. This is where we explore the science and stories behind human longevity. Today we return to the subject of dementia. The extraordinary power of music to heal, to nurture and to invigorate the brain. I've gone to Brentwood in California, and a rehearsal session at Music Mends Minds, which is a charitable organization devoted to restoring, as they say, the rhythm of life. I'm joined by Project co-founder and co-director, Carol Rosenstein You're very welcome to the Live Long and Master Aging podcast.

**[00:01:21] Carol Rosenstein**

Well, thank you, Peter for having me speak with you today.

**[00:01:24] Peter Bowes**

It's really good to see you. And you might be able to hear a little bit of music in the background. We're at one of your rehearsals. Just tell me exactly what is going on here, where we are, and who's with us. We are gathered at the Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Brentwood. And we are a group of people, kind of lost souls until music found us, and we found music. And all of our members of our Fifth Dementia band have neuro-cognitive disease, something like Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's. Even traumatic brain injury, stroke and even PTSD. We are making music together. We're grooving together. We are loving together. We are smiling and laughing together and forgetting the woes that seem to follow us where ever we go.

**[00:02:18] Peter Bowes**

Let's just repeat the name of the band again. I think is fantastic. Fifth Dementia band.

**[00:02:23] Carol Rosenstein**

The Fifth Dementia band.

**[00:02:25] Peter Bowes**

Who thought of that?

**[00:02:26] Carol Rosenstein**

We actually put a request out to a group of friends to come up with a name for our band, and one of our friends did just that.

**[00:02:36] Peter Bowes**

So how did it all start for you? When did you get involved in this and what was the inspiration behind it?

**[00:02:42] Carol Rosenstein**

My Irwin was diagnosed with Parkinson's 12 years ago. And of course there are strong neurotransmitters that are given orally, and side effects occur. And so he was hallucinating, and really going crazy with all of the people living

in our home. And I reported these findings to our neurologist. He said, Carol, we have to drop some of the dosages of the meds because this is a side effect. So we did as ordered. And I could see that Irwin's world had fallen out the bottom of him. Yes, I saw something amazing repeatedly that as he would sit playing the piano quietly in our home, he would somehow resurrect. And become engaged in the environment again. So I reported this finding to Dr. Bronstein, and he so nonchalantly said Carol, you're watching the power of music changing brain chemistry. Well I hadn't ever heard words like this before. And I was enchanted. I thought this is absolutely amazing. I'm gonna find a few like souls that are struggling and play music to come and jam with Irwin. And so four people met on the day that we launched, and within 15 minutes they gathered around a beautiful Steinway piano with a drum set, a kit right there, and a harmonica player. And the four of them had not stopped until our Sam departed sadly about a year ago. But three of our four core members of our Fifth Dementia still play on and we've grown. It's caught fire. The whole project has just accelerated like an accelerant was poured all over us.

**[00:04:38] Peter Bowes**

And what is really interesting to me is that there is good, strong, reliable science behind what you have been observing, observing in your home, but also the people here in this band now.

**[00:04:50] Carol Rosenstein**

I really had no background as to what music was really doing for all of us. It so happens to be an amazing medicine for the mind for this community of people because believe it or not there's a storage of music in the cells in the brain and in our bodies appeared to be intact during the disease process. And so we really place our whole project on the platform of music memory in cells that are immune to the disease, and at any stage of the continuum - early, middle or late - you will get a response, musically, from all of these patients. And they don't forget what they learned in their lives. The lyrics come back. It's almost as if they're on automatic pilot. We put the lyrics, you know they're available to them, but I think they just remember because they don't read anymore. And now violinists, and now our trumpeters, they just are playing by memory, and their music is flawless. And so you put a whole group of these wonderful musicians and singers together and you will be so shocked and so delighted that there's still something left for these people to do and it's music.

**[00:06:19] Peter Bowes**

I've mentioned this before on the podcast but I spent some time with Glen Campbell shortly after he and his family announced to the world that he had Alzheimer's and this is before he went on a world tour final world tour. And I spent the day in his studio and he was singing all the old hits and playing his guitar. Incredibly, as he always did. But here he is, well into a significant stage of Alzheimer's, having problems remembering day-to-day minute by minute things. But as his family described it to me, he seemed to have his music from those great hits, from decades ago almost in his bones, they somewhere deep within his body.

**[00:07:06] Carol Rosenstein**

In their DNA. In his in his DNA. This is quite correct. And so, you know, it's been a magic carpet ride. It's been a project I never would have dreamed would have taken off at this alarming rate. We have bands all over the USA now forming and we now have six global bands and BBC World Service told our story in the UK and wherever else it reaches. And our e-mails have been flooding in from people wanting to create a band of musicians and singers of these like people with these diseases so that the music can convert our suffering into pure joy. It is an amazing project.

**[00:08:00] Peter Bowes**

I will put a link to the BBC documentary that you mentioned, which I didn't have anything to do with it even though I work for the BBC. But I will reference that in the show notes for this episode. Because I listened to that as well, and it's a great program. And it does tell your story and it's very inspirational. And I'm not surprised that people are wanting to do this in different cities around the world. I'm curious with your own experience with your husband. Has the music helped him stabilize or indeed improve in certain areas of his life?

**[00:08:32] Carol Rosenstein**

That's such a good question, Peter. We're actually working with Dr. Mary Mittelman out of NYU in New York and she's a world-renowned researcher, and she has just finished a project looking at singing music for people with these diseases, and the effects on these patients and their caregivers. And the results are staggering. There's just a renewed enthusiasm, there is a refill, if you will, of life into people that have had nothing else to do. So now that she's got the singing project completed, we are now looking at actually examining the brains of patients with Alzheimer's and dementia, and we're going to be looking at what the music is doing. There are several hypotheses that she's going to be looking at. And to mention a few, is that playing a musical instrument, which is of the highest brain demand, can actually excite the brain into such a fiesta, if you were, that we're looking at music playing as a pause button for the disease process.

**[00:10:01] Peter Bowes**

Which is really fascinating, isn't it? That almost music can be as powerful, indeed, more powerful, than drugs?

**[00:10:09] Carol Rosenstein**

Well, that's correct. Because today, the drugs are few and I know from personal experience with Irwin and his degree of dementia. Now, there are very few drugs to experiment with or to take. And he's been taking a

medication now that a 10 milligram of this works, but a 20 milligram, which we did move onto, caused him to not to be able to get out of bed the next morning. And it's written up in the literature, that's a side effect that these medications can bring. So to think about music and the safety mechanism around music, to be able to touch everybody regardless of their diagnosis. And I might say, it includes the caregivers. It includes the families, it includes the audiences that collect for a concert. Everyone is high on life at the close of a concert, because of what the music is doing to everybody. It's real magic.

**[00:11:16] Peter Bowes**

Well I've seen some of that magic myself today. And we'll have a listen to some of the music. I want you to tell me about a couple of the members of your group here, and we're going to hear from them as well. Gene, first of all. Gene was one of the core of four. He is a wonderful drummer and has Parkinson's. And Gene actually has a wonderful story to tell. He had developed a Parkinson's tremor that made it difficult for him to even hold a drumstick. And he had something called deep brain stimulation where they go into the brain and find some point and do some thing to that point that has curbed the tremor, and Gene now, is living his life without the tremor, which was driving him crazy. So, he has Parkinson's, he's taken care of his tremor. He's playing lots of music and we're looking hopefully to see Gene on the road with us for a long, long time because of the music.

**[00:12:25] Peter Bowes**

Gene, it's good to see you.

**[00:12:26] Gene**

Thank you. Good to be here.

**[00:12:27] Peter Bowes**

How long have you been involved with this?

**[00:12:29] Gene**

So I've been involved with this about four years. When I got back to Los Angeles after being away for educational purposes and other events, I was diagnosed with this condition. And that put a big strain, and a limitation on the availability and aspects of different freelance work I could go after, like I've been doing for most of my life as a musician. So this was an opportunity to do something different, and learn about this issue called Alzheimer's. And learn how to integrate my schooling in my professional work of many years into this ensemble in a way that lets the ensemble be what it is without dictating any specific music or musicianship demands.

**[00:13:22] Peter Bowes**

And you have Parkinson's disease.

**[00:13:24] Gene**

I do.

**[00:13:25] Peter Bowes**

When were you diagnosed?

**[00:13:26] Gene**

About five, six years ago.

**[00:13:28] Peter Bowes**

And how are you doing?

**[00:13:29] Gene**

Actually, at this point, I'm doing really well. Best I've ever been since getting it.

**[00:13:31] Peter Bowes**

And the involvement with this group, obviously you've been a musician all your, life but you're very active as a musician now, with a very diverse group of people. How does music help you, do you think, with your condition?

**[00:13:49] Gene**

For one thing I spend an awful lot of time during the week, and most often, daily, listening to different classical things on YouTube and buying recordings, and composing. Music is a way to have like a ground of perspective. In other words, things emanate. And the fruition of the stimulation of music sort of affects all events for me. It's out there like a big floral field of beautiful flowers and other vegetation.

**[00:14:31] Peter Bowes**

And the people here in this group part of the band here. Is it fair to say, most suffering from Alzheimer's?

**[00:14:38] Gene**

Yes.

**[00:14:39] Peter Bowes**

How have you seen their progress over the years that you've been involved?

**[00:14:44] Gene**

Well, for one thing, what immediately comes off my mind is their dedication and persistence and showing up here. They're not people that, for the most part, given their different conditions and things come up with in their life, which are their primary demands at that time. They don't have that, they show up here regularly, and it's a nonjudgemental, noncritical environment. Nobody is put on the spot. Nobody's told that they're not singing in pitch or that they have to pay more attention to the rhythm. They basically gathered those kind of improvements over time by just being attentive in the ensemble and during the rehearsals. So we rehearse all year during the week at least two times, and then perform concerts three or four times a week a year.

**[00:15:44] Peter Bowes**

And those concerts, they must be a blast.

**[00:15:46] Gene**

Concerts are great. They're very enthusiastically attended. And people really get a kick out of it. They're not seeing people that are limited or are handicapped, they're seeing people that come to this event with their heart completely open to sit and deliver these beautiful songs in this beautiful music. So it's a really great one on one and really get great encounter between people in the audience and our ensemble I think.

**[00:16:20] Peter Bowes**

Well I think you're doing great work. And I know you're involved in the rehearsal today. So I'm going to let you get back to that.

**[00:16:26] Gene**

Okay, thanks Peter.

**[00:16:27] Peter Bowes**

But, really, congratulations and what you're doing.

**[00:16:29] Gene**

Thank you so much.

**[00:16:30] Peter Bowes**

So that was Gene. And, Carol, what an extraordinary character.

**[00:16:34] Carol Rosenstein**

Indeed, very colorful.

**[00:16:36] Peter Bowes**

Another colorful lady is Diana. And she's been with you for a good few years as well.

**[00:16:41] Carol Rosenstein**

Yes. With us for several years now. Diana has Parkinson's. And she was concerned because she'd heard about our band, but she didn't play a musical instrument. This is when our choir became very active, and she came to me one day she said well isn't my voice an instrument? And couldn't I use my voice as an instrument to become a musician of the Fifth Dementia band? And so that's how Diana was introduced to us.

**[00:17:10] Peter Bowes**

And what does Diana do?

**[00:17:12] Carol Rosenstein**

Diana is a speech pathologist, mostly retired, a brilliant artist, and that's where we actually met, initially, in art class. And has turned into a benefactor, par excellence and a dear, dear friend.

**[00:17:30] Peter Bowes**

Diana, good to see you.

**[00:17:32] Diana**

Thank you.

**[00:17:33] Peter Bowes**

So what are you doing today?

**[00:17:35] Diana**

I am attending my rehearsal for a concert. We have a group called Music Mends Minds.

**[00:17:43] Peter Bowes**

You were diagnosed with Parkinson's disease six, or seven years ago?

**[00:17:47] Diana**

Something like that.

**[00:17:49] Peter Bowes**

How are you doing?

**[00:17:51] Diana**

I think I'm doing very well.

**[00:17:53] Peter Bowes**

And we should, obviously, our audience can't see you but just tell us how old you are.

**[00:17:58] Diana**

I'm 73.

**[00:18:00] Peter Bowes**

And I've got to say, for 73. You don't look 73. You look great. You look very healthy. And clearly this is a lot of fun for you, isn't it?

**[00:18:09] Diana**

It really is. I got attached. At the beginning, Carol was asking for musicians or musicians in their lives, to come in and play what they play. And I don't play an instrument. So when she was saying that, I said wait a minute, wait a minute, I do have an instrument. She said what kind of instrument? I said I play my vocal chords. And she pointed to where the choir was grouping, she said go over there and sing with them. And that was it. And it's wonderful, because you're a part of. You know everybody's a part of, really the same things. And it's kind of a group that feels connected, you know, and you can talk about, I guess if you're having a problem or, you know I haven't had much of that in terms of talking to people, just you know how are you doing, and you know are you still blah blah blah whatever.

**[00:19:03] Peter Bowes**

And in terms of your health, what do you feel you get out of it, what does it give you to be involved?

**[00:19:09] Diana**

I think sometimes more fear and sometimes less fear. You know, I think that in being able to cut through you know what a diagnosis is towards who is this person, is very different. And I you know at the beginning it was a little little bit of fear. You know. Is that what I'm going to look like? I don't really think about that. I haven't thought about that in years. My major symptom, my only symptom, really, is a little bit of a tremor in my left arm. Other than that, really not much. I do a lot of exercise, I am a boxer, I box. And then other exercise, too. But it's really important. That's what I hear that that's that's really the one thing that will help you to slow down the progress of this disease.

**[00:20:01] Peter Bowes**

Physical activity.

**[00:20:03] Diana**

Rigorous, physical activity.

**[00:20:06] Peter Bowes**

Most of the people around you in the band and in the choir they have Alzheimer's.

**[00:20:12] Diana**

Some do, and some have Parkinson's, and some have Alzheimer's.

**[00:20:17] Peter Bowes**

And obviously there's a tremendous amount of attention these days given to the benefit of music for groups like this. You've been here some time. Can you describe to me what you've seen in terms of how people are flourishing because of the music?

**[00:20:33] Diana**

Well, what I see is at the beginning, they had people who were kind of kicking and screaming, you know I'm not going to go there. You know I think, it's like, especially if you're more ill, I think it's a lot to think about. Like where am, I what am I doing? But I think what's happened is that there's a cohesiveness that's developed. We know people's names. And we're interested in what they're doing. You know how they're doing. And we've had some outside activities at someone's house because she was going to play a documentary that she's done about us, we haven't seen it yet. It's a pretty remarkable place. You know, someone like Gene, who creates all of this music and the program and all of that not just for us. Yeah, I mean you know these musicians are talented, these are musicians from their other life and this life.

**[00:21:26] Peter Bowes**

Because, of course, we are in Los Angeles and a lot of professional musicians are here. And it's an opportunity, this is a venue, really, just to extend those careers, in a sense, isn't that right.

**[00:21:36] Diana**

That's right. Yeah.

**[00:21:37] Peter Bowes**

Well it's really good to see that this has just become such an integral part of your life. And clearly a very important one.

**[00:21:43] Diana**

I hope so, because it's really it's special and you know music, I've always loved music, I love musical theater. So I'm kind of one of those. It's great to be able to have this connection to the real world and to knowing that you can be, and have what you've had. It's not all gone.

**[00:22:07] Peter Bowes**

That's the key, isn't it? it's not all gone. It's still here to live for.

**[00:22:11] Diana**

Oh yeah. Well, not everybody is that sick. You know it's a very slow progression for some people, some people not. In how I am, and how I feel, I don't feel sick. You know I know I have the tremor but I paint. It's actually a good tool. You know interesting lines.

**[00:22:33] Peter Bowes**

There's a good lesson for probably for anyone, music aside, and that is activity. And you talk about the strenuous activity, of boxing and others, like painting. It's always moving, it's always thinking, always doing something.

**[00:22:46] Diana**

Yeah. I'm not a sedentary person. I never have been. So I carry it on you know, valiantly, in my life.

**[00:22:57] Peter Bowes**

It's really good to meet you. You're doing some good work here.

**[00:23:00] Diana**

Thank you.

**[00:23:01] Peter Bowes**

I'm going to let you get back to the rehearsal.

**[00:23:03] Diana**

Yeah. You come see us.

**[00:23:04] Peter Bowes**

I'm going to see you.

**[00:23:05] Diana**

Alright.

**[00:23:05] Peter Bowes**

Let's have a listen to some of the music.

**[00:23:12] Carol Rosenstein**

She's a real fighter, too, because the Parkinson's paw prints are very much following her now. And she's even doing boxing, which is big in the Parkinson world.

**[00:23:24] Peter Bowes**

Yeah she described it.

**[00:23:25] Carol Rosenstein**

And so she is exceedingly active, and has an assistant to kind of pick up the pieces around her, and make her day as full as possible. And she's just a love, just a darling human being. And I tell you we all get so close to each other and that's what this whole project is about. We just love and adore all of us, and all of us are going down the road together singing.

**[00:23:56] Peter Bowes**

Yeah. And it's great music as well. The one thing you talked about earlier was, and we kind of equated the power of music to the power of drugs. But of course with drugs there are side effects and potential complications. I just wonder what we're learning from this that we can apply to our lives when we're much younger, when we're free of diseases. And how, perhaps we could use music almost as a preventative measure for some of these conditions.

**[00:24:24] Carol Rosenstein**

Well that's another aspect that we're wanting Mary Mittelman to look at and that is when a child becomes musical and takes that musicality with them all the way through their lives that if they have the DNA for a neuro-

degenerative disease, that they, the music could be a piggy bank that could actually stall the onset of the disease. Or, if it doesn't stall it, and it's caught early enough that it could even possibly reverse it. And these are details that we are facing now as we explore the medical uses of music.

**[00:25:20] Peter Bowes**

So that's really fascinating, isn't it? That here you are dealing with older people, and there are some very old people, here people in their 90s. Yet the knowledge that you are gleaned from this could actually be applicable to children.

**[00:25:33] Carol Rosenstein**

Indeed. And so, really, Music Mends Minds as an organization has just rolled out a public awareness and education campaign. And what I've had my student assistants from UCLA do for us. We've researched and summarized the literature showing what music has already been written up as in the literature. And so now we are on this campaign to bring these musical facts to the public at large so that we can indeed educate all of us.

**[00:26:14] Peter Bowes**

What are your immediate plans for the future. What were you actually rehearsing for today?

**[00:26:19] Carol Rosenstein**

Music Mends Minds is about to turn 4 years old, and that means Fifth Dementia, happy four years, as well. And on the 15th of September we will be holding a big bash, Happy Birthday Concert, right here in the Brentwood Presbyterian Church. It will be standing room only, packed to the gills packed to the rafters. And we, believe it or not, are live streamed globally. And so if anybody would like to e-mail us, I'd love to give you our website, and we can indeed keep you on our mailing list and you will know the details of how to pick us up on the live stream if you would like to listen to our concert in real time.

**[00:27:08] Peter Bowes**

Well, I'll tell you what, as I mentioned before, I'll put those details in the show notes so anyone can go looking at the Live Long Master Aging podcast, see a link to live streaming of your concerts, which I think is great that you can do that.

**[00:27:22] Carol Rosenstein**

And we also have a Facebook livestream that we'll be using as well.

**[00:27:26] Peter Bowes**

I wonder, as you are involved with this, as you're living your life with your husband and seeing him change clearly over the years, and become more impaired because of his condition, what have you learned that really sticks in your mind, perhaps even that you could apply to yourself as you grow older?

**[00:27:49] Carol Rosenstein**

I now have such respect for music, generally, and I'm a pianist of many years. I haven't played in many years but I was a good child protegee, and I really respect music so today, not only for the enjoyment, but for the medicinal aspects of it. Now Irwin's key diagnosis with the dementia is Parkinson's, so we know that's a movement disorder. And believe it or not about three or four times a day we have John Philip Sousa marching music through our Bose speakers around our house. And when Irwin is at his lowest ebb, somehow he unfolds himself from a heap, and he marches, he catches fire to the marching beat, and all of us, caregiver Carol, and friends who may be visiting, we march through our house clapping and letting our hair down and resetting all of our brains and lifting our spirits. Because this journey, Peter this is tough. And so quickly depression comes, because it's just an endless battle. And the music changes us instantly, and so as I move down the road, personally, I'm just going to love my music all the more. And please, God, I'm going to be around a long time to enjoy it to the max.

**[00:29:31] Peter Bowes**

How old is your husband now?

**[00:29:32] Carol Rosenstein**

Irwin just turned 82.

**[00:29:34] Carol Rosenstein**

He's 82.

**[00:29:35] Peter Bowes**

And he was on the keyboards there today? Front and center?

**[00:29:37] Carol Rosenstein**

He was on the keyboards today. And I find now with his degree of dementia he catches fire less easily. So he's really got to, you know, have some kind of a spark that doesn't come all the time, now, but when that spark comes, he's played himself through a dementia attack. One of our concerts a year or so ago, of course he knew that we were going to be having this concert. We all assembled in the church. He took his seat in front of the keyboard and then he started to suddenly, what am I doing here? Who are these people? Nobody told me about this. I need to go

home now. And I was at my wits end because we were really about to start the concert, and I said Irwin, Dorothy the caregiver's right by your knee, if you need anything, tell her. But we're about to start the concert, and please just play music and catch fire. Well, Peter, I saw a miracle before my eyes. Irwin never missed a beat. He moved through his dementia attack. Had he been somewhere, they would have medicated him, because he was in that kind of circumstance. And I watched firsthand what music did to take him through an entire dementia episode. And my goodness what an education I am getting first hand.

**[00:31:11] Peter Bowes**

That's truly inspirational, isn't it? And it's interesting you say you're getting this education first hand. This podcast is all about longevity. It's about, for a lot of people, living long and healthy, and a long health span. But, equally, I think we all know and understand that no matter how we live our lives, no matter how healthy we try to be, there are things that will descend upon us that we have little or no control over. And you well understand that. So, I'm wondering what you would say to people who clearly want to aspire to be living long and as healthy as they can, with the fact that you know, better than most, that in a moment, things can change and you might not live long healthy life that you'd always aspired to. Yet, my sense from seeing what you've done today, is that there are still things you can do to live a full life, no matter what's been thrown at you.

**[00:32:11] Carol Rosenstein**

Absolutely. And you know we talk about exercise, we talk about good diet, we talk about eight hours of sleep, and how much water you need to drink all day. And I think on this list of how to stay young and forestall the aging process, I think we're going to have to add music in capital letters on this list of how to stay young. I've really not thought about it until this moment, but it is one of the most important ingredients.

**[00:32:47] Peter Bowes**

That is a great way to finish this. In fact, what we'll do to finish is listen to a little bit of the Fifth Dementia, your band, you've been rehearsing today, beckoned players out. Carol, thank you so much for joining us.

**[00:33:00] Carol Rosenstein**

Peter, I cannot thank you enough.

**[00:33:02] Peter Bowes**

And, just a reminder, we mentioned a few links. Those links will be in the show notes for this episode. You can read those at Live long and Master Aging, our website, LLAMApodcast.com, that's LLAMApodcast.com You can also follow these in social media at LLAM podcast, and I'll tweet information about this, and tweet the link to watch and to listen to Carol and her band live, I'll put that into Facebook as well. Thank you for listening.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



Automated transcription by Sonix  
www.sonix.ai