



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA D33

MUSIC, DRAMA, DANCE, PERFORMING ARTS,
FILM AND SCREEN STUDIES



RESEARCHER

Amy Hardie

OUTPUT TITLE

Seven Songs for a Long Life

OUTPUT TYPE

Digital or Visual Media

DATE OF PREMIERE

October 2015

FIG. 1
Poster for *Seven Songs for a Long Life*. Design by Joakim Karlsson, 2015.



Film available at:
(link removed)

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.7488/197bc9c5-f3ed-424c-82f2-a91a7b728de3>

01 / STATEMENT

Seven Songs for a Long Life is a documentary film that resulted from an interdisciplinary creative collaboration between the documentary film-maker Amy Hardie, medical and health care professionals and patients at the end of life.

When the research project began in 2011, the UK health system was based on a medical model emphasising a disease-led approach to care. Challenging this model, and working with patients, families and staff, Hardie explored documentary interventions in palliative care in Strathcarron hospice in Scotland.

Hardie worked with 15 families to make films in an iterative process that included reflective listening and screenings. These films were, variously: legacies, made for those facing bereavement; portraits taking stock of patient life stories; play spaces, expressing parts of themselves that get submerged in the problem-solving ethos of dealing with illness; and unspoken observations where families used the camera to communicate emotions hard to express in words.

Between 2013 and 2018, demand by UK palliative care policy makers grew for these short films which screened, for instance, to an audience of 2,500 at 'Building Bridges' conference in London, at 'Changing Capacities' in Liverpool, and 'World Congress of European association of Palliative Care' in Prague.

The participation of patients and staff continued as Hardie directed the final feature documentary, (supported by UK and international funding of £302k), and designed post-screening workshops. These deepened audience engagement with the themes of the film, i.e. values at end of life, capacity of carers, and fear of mortality, developing into seminars for health professionals and NHS policy makers.

The cinema feature premiered in October 2015 in Scotland, and was then bought by 8 countries and distributed by Argot Pictures and Cargo in the USA.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS



FIG. 2
Screenshot from film *Seven Songs for a Long Life*, 2012. Photo Amy Hardie.

Seven Songs for a Long Life is a documentary film directed by Amy Hardie, developed from innovative camera and sound interventions in palliative care at Strathcarron Hospice, near Glasgow.

The participatory practice grew into a widely disseminated feature documentary accompanied by public engagement, patient-led short 'extras', and post-screening workshops for the public and policy makers.

It premiered in October 2015 in Scotland, followed by approximately 400 festival, cinema and broadcast screenings in 15 countries and extensive public engagement workshops. See Appendix A: List of Performances & Screenings, page 14.

03 / ORIGINALITY



FIG. 3
Screenshot from film: Tosh singing
to hairdresser, 2012. Photo Amy
Hardie.

Hardie led two years of development with hospice patients and staff, which produced an innovative structure of documentary-in-song for the final feature film.

New camera, sound, singing and post-production techniques were developed to allow spontaneous singing to be captured with each patient confident of finding ‘their best voice’. Song became a way for the patients, staff and the documentary director to talk about and share the nature of life with a terminal illness. The value of this new approach to engagement was recognised by palliative care policy leaders, including Dame Barbara Munroe, who recommended it to the UK Palliative Leadership Collaborative in 2015:

‘The film is spectacular. And because it was made in such an unusual way, developed over years and emerging out of dozens of short films made for the patients, there remains a wealth of observational material that can be used in workshops. It will bring the general public into a deeply felt connection with their own mortality.’ See Appendix B: Press and Longer Commentaries, page 16.

Dame Barbara Munroe, Chair Palliative Leadership Collaborative Edinburgh 2015.

Film Critics gave four and five star reviews, in among other publications, The Guardian, the Independent, the Wall Street Journal and A list festival reviews:

‘A space of illness and loss is suddenly transformed, bodies wracked by pain or dulled by medication become playful again, and what emerges taps into something at once both deeply human and soaringly transcendent.’

Blackburne, 2016.

The film was selected as one of 16 for the PBS international flagship programme, POV in the US, and one of 15 features for IDFA’s main competition in the Netherlands. It made the top five features of 2015 by Vulturehound film magazine in UK (FIGS 4–5). Interviews and articles on Amy Hardie appeared on US television (Wnet, PBS), BBC radio, film, news and medical journals and blogs (BMJ, Independent). See Appendix B: Press and Longer Commentaries, page 16.

The film has been viewed across every state in the US, and has screened in over 250 cinemas in 15 countries (US, UK, Sweden, Canada, South Korea, China, Finland, Sudan, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Taiwan, France, Australia, New Zealand), with 150 transmissions across the UK, Europe and the US.

Seven Songs for a Long Life has been invited to over 40 international film festivals, including SxSW (South by Southwest) and was nominated for five awards in 2016:

- Best Female-Directed Documentary Feature at DOXA, Canada 2016.
- Best Factual Single at the Celtic Media Festival, Ireland 2016.
- AOK Film Award for Health Subjects with a Creative Approach at the Emden-Norderney Film Festival, Germany 2016.
- Gamechanger Award at SxSW, USA 2016.
- Best Single Documentary and the Scottish BAFTAs 2016.

Over 400 UK doctors have requested the film to 'prescribe' to their patients, and the film has reached policy-makers and changed palliative practice in the UK, USA and South Korea through its workshops for the public and health providers. See References, page 21.

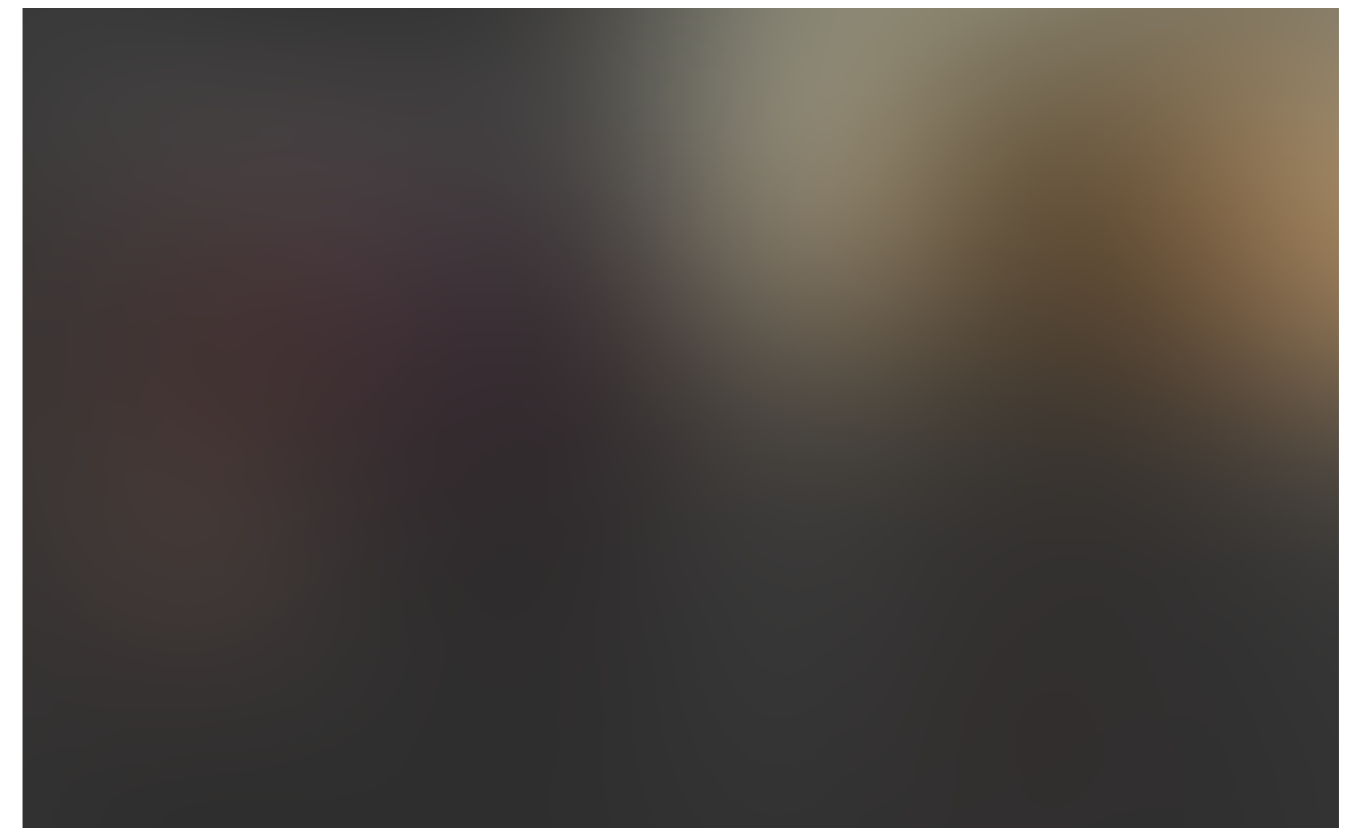
The extensive coverage of the film in the press and on social media was reinforced by a fun endorsement by Michael Stipe of REM, who blogged about the film to 4.7 million viewers on Facebook: "an awesome documentary... A special shout out goes to Mandy, the nurse who sang the duet of 'Everybody Hurts'."

Total funding was £302,000. International funders include POV from the US, YLE from Finland, Creative Scotland and BBC Scotland. The Bertha Foundation, Britdoc Connect fund. The Funding Network supported the films' interdisciplinary engagement, and it featured as part of a keynote in NHS Scotland's Anticipatory Care Planning programme, and continues to be used in continual development in nurse training.

It has been licenced in six further countries: by the CBC in Canada, YLE in Finland, UR in Sweden, Legendary in Taiwan, RTV Slovenia and BBC South Korea. It was distributed in the USA by Argot Pictures and Cargo handled the educational rights.



FIGS. 4-5
Vulturehound magazine award
and double page spread, 2015.



04 / RIGOUR

This submission represents several years of research and development into using documentary film to address the end of life.

Participative family film-making had been explored in Hardie's previous work with the Maggie's Centres, and the aesthetic that made dreams and inner states visible had been developed in her previous feature *The Edge of Dreaming* (2010). Building on the augmented home-movie style of that film, patient family-filmed workshop sequences become montage for song.

Filming with lyrics and several characters yielded new insights around end of life care and creativity. These techniques were documented in a chapter 'Movie-Making as Palliative Care', which Hardie was invited to submit for publication in 2017. See References, page 21.

The process of research and filming was monitored by a team from Edinburgh University's Health in Social Science, who interviewed hospice patients and staff several times over the three years of filming:

"the camera doesn't lie and I went 'Oh, that's me'... I didn't really see myself like that until I saw it on the film... I thought it was quite good because I thought, well, it's like an acceptance...and you know, I'm still the same person whether I look different physically, it doesn't mean to say that I've changed inwardly."

See Appendix C: Patient feedback, page 19.



FIG. 6
Film workshop for Nikki's
children, 2014. Photo Amy Hardie.

05 / SIGNIFICANCE



FIG. 7
Post-screening workshop
audience workshop on facing
death, 2017. Photo Amy Hardie.

Peer review was critical at several stages of the research process: the position of film-maker in residence at Strathcarron Hospice was competitively awarded from an interview process including palliative care professionals and a specialist in art in hospice.

This was followed by review from the UK Palliative Care Leadership Collaborative in March 2015 at Columbia Hospice, who decided to make *Seven Songs for a Long Life* their key presentation for Hospice UK.

A cross-disciplinary working party from the NHS Health Improvement Scotland, The Royal College of Nursing and Edinburgh University's Medical School and Health in Social Science scrutinised and supported Hardie to design post-screening workshops for patients and health staff. See Appendix D: Workshops, page 20.

The impact of the documentary film on the patients and audiences was monitored through independent qualitative and quantitative research by The Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy, 2016, whose report showed that the film was succeeding in changing perceptions around dying. See Appendix E: Audience Feedback, page 20.

06 / APPENDIX

APPENDIX A:

List of Performances & Screenings

| | |
|--------------|---|
| October 2015 | Premiere at MacRobert Centre, Stirling, Scotland (audience of 400) |
| October 2015 | Bo'Ness |
| October 2015 | Phoenix London |
| October 2015 | Dominion Edinburgh |
| October 2015 | GFT Glasgow |
| October 2015 | Crouch End Arts Cinema London |
| 2015–2017 | 134 UK screenings (Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales), 12 Czech Republic screenings, 8 German screenings |
| 2016–2020 | 680 USA screenings covering 50 states, 8 New Zealand screenings |

Film Festivals (award nominations*)

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| November 2015 | Being Human Film Festival, Southampton, UK |
| February 2016 | DocPoint, Helsinki, Finland |
| February 2016 | Mareel Shetlands, UK |
| February 2016 | Gather Film Festival, UK |
| March 2016 | One World Film Festival, Prague, and Tour, Czech Republic |
| March 2016 | Thessaloniki Doc Market, Greece |
| April 2016* | SXSW International Film Festival, USA |
| May 2016 | Hot Springs International Film Festival, USA |
| May 2016 | Scottish Mental Health Festival, UK |
| May 2016* | DOXA International Film Festival, Canada 2016 |
| June 2016* | Celtic Media Festival, UK |
| June 2016 | South Bay Film and Music Festival, USA |
| June 2016 | DocEdge International Film Festival, New Zealand |
| June 2016* | Emden–Norderney International Film Festival, Germany |
| July 2016 | Stranraer Film Festival, UK |

August 2016

EBS International Documentary Festival, South Korea

August 2016

Guth Gafa International Film Festival, Dublin, Ireland

October 2016

Margaret Mead International Film Festival, USA

October 2016

Naples International Film Festival, USA

August 2016

EBS International Documentary Festival, South Korea

September 2016

Edinburgh Printmakers 'Time is All Around', UK

September 2016

Aspen International Film Festival, USA

November 2016*

BAFTA Scotland, UK

January 2017

Sudan Independent International Film Festival (SIFF), Sudan

January 2017

ReFrame Peterborough International Film Festival, Canada

March 2017

Sebastapol International Documentary Film Festival, USA

May 2017

Meditative Life Series International, Jacob Burns Film Center, USA

Television Screenings

| | |
|---|--|
| October 2015 | BBC Scotland |
| January 2017 | POV (Public Broadcasting Service, USA) |
| http://www.pbs.org/pov/watch/sevensongs/ | |
| | EBS South Korea |
| January 2018 | CBC Canada |
| | UR Sweden |
| | YLE Finland |
| January 2019 | Radio-Canada |
| | UR Sweden |
| | Legendary Entertainment Taiwan |
| | RTV Slovenia |

APPENDIX B:**Press and longer commentaries
(excerpts removed)****Selected text, television and radio**

Total Film ☆☆☆☆

Wall Street Journal

Hollywoodbitchslap

<https://www.hollywoodbitchslap.com/feature.php?feature=3927>

Film News ☆☆☆☆

<https://www.film-news.co.uk/review/UK/1490/Read>

The Guardian ☆☆☆☆

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/oct/01/seven-songs-long-life-review-honesty-documentary-hospice-dying>

Glasgow Herald ☆☆☆☆

Vulturehound ☆☆☆☆

Palliative Care Research Society Newsletter,
Issue 41, February 2016.Dame Barbara Munroe, Chair Palliative
Leadership Collaborative Edinburgh 2015.Caregiver Relief, US, David Heltz,
January 2017.<https://caregiverrelief.com/2016/03/seven-songs-for-a-long-life/>Ros Taylor MBE, Statement from National
Director for the charity Hospice Care,
22 April 2015.

Independent

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/making-britain-a-better-place-to-die-patients-in-their-final-days-present-a-unique-challenge-to-a6723246.html>

RealScreen

<https://realscreen.com/2016/03/10/exclusive-clip-seven-songs-for-a-long-life/>

Hollywomen

<http://hollywomen.com/innovative-sxsw-2016/>**TV interviews**

Wnet

https://www.thirteen.org/metrofocus/2017/01/seven-songs-long-life/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter**Excerpts from longer commentaries
(excerpts removed)**Clare Blackburne, *Seven Songs For a Long Life: An Important Reminder of How We Want to Live*,
14 October 2016.<https://www.mhfestival.com/news/talking-heads/285-seven-songs-for-a-long-life>Michael Brittenham's article for POV Digital
Interview with Hardie, 18 January 2017.**APPENDIX C:****Hospice staff and patient feedback
during filming**Full patient / staff transcripts have been requested by researcher Outi Hakoula, Academy of Finland Research Fellow, who is writing a paper on the significance of the *Seven Songs for a Long Life* in palliative education. Selected excerpts grouped by theme:**On iterative collaboration**

‘It’s not a one-off thing, (filming she’ll come back to me, we’ll look at the stuff and then see how we can develop it and how we can improve what we’ve done which is really good because it’s a bit like working like I used to when I was a DJ... You can see people buzzing a wee bit and that’s good.’

‘It’s really good for us because it works both ways like, you know. It’s not just a one way thing this - we appreciate getting help but we also like to help people as well. Even though we’re not well, we can always do something for other people, so it’s a two way thing.’

‘You can edit it and if you say, ‘I don’t like that, well that didn’t go down well’, you can edit it out. I think that’s great as well.’

Acceptance

‘When I saw myself, the camera doesn’t lie and I went ‘Oh, that’s me’, you know so I’m not saying I got a shock but I didn’t really see myself like that until I saw it on the film. Do you know what I mean? And I think in a way I thought it was quite good because I thought, well, it’s like an acceptance. Do you know what I mean? You’ve just got to accept it.’

I don’t know how to explain it it just it makes you a wee bit more, well, you just accept and you know, I’m still the same person whether I look different physically it doesn’t mean to say that I’ve changed inwardly so that’s the main thing.’

Process

‘The thing I enjoyed the most was my children working together, there’s two boys and two girls and they were all excited and they were all working together. It was great for us all to be doing something.’

‘There’s so many of our patients have skills that they don’t even realise that they do have... the others were saying (after first short screened ‘oh do you know that was just such a grand thing to see’, and ‘oh, wasn’t he good?’

Legacy

‘I loved seeing that old lady who’s passed away. She was hilarious and you know, she’s still there on that film. Even though she’s passed away she’s still there and I think that’s a great thing’

‘My family... they really liked it. I think secretly they know that they can still have Mum on it when I’m not here so it’ll be good.’

Audiences

‘It’s kind of like a future thing, I think it will be quite beneficial to other people, and it will help the hospice as well and even staff, gives them ideas and what kind of things they could be doing that works well.’

APPENDIX D: Workshops

Partnerships were formed with 11 UK and 13 international palliative care charities, who paired with cinemas and community halls to screen the film, and to run the workshops designed by Hardie. Workshops were run in 54 locations in 5 countries (US, UK, Eire, South Korea, Germany) from 2016–2019.

Description

<https://www.sevensongsfilm.com/workshops>

Post screening workshop

<https://vimeo.com/188827036>

Teachers resource pack

<http://archive.pov.org/sevensongs/lesson-plan>

Nursing revalidation

<https://www.sevensongsfilm.com/revalidation>

APPENDIX E: Audience Feedback from Film Screenings

From The Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy questionnaire 2016 – 618 respondents from 40 UK screenings.

Findings

- 70% of the audience agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident to think about and share their own end of life plans.
- 96% recommended *Seven Songs for a Long Life* as a way of helping others approach the subject of a terminal diagnosis.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed they felt less anxious about the prospect of what would happen if they eventually needed hospice care.
- 86% came to the realization that hospice care can be part of life.

Audience Feedback

‘As well as finding this film incredibly sad, there were so many hilarious moments. I would love to show this film to every person I’m close to.’

‘What a powerful, moving, inspirational film about amazing people.’

‘Beautifully shot, nice editing, really magical sound design. A film about death that brings me to life. Thank you. This is the first documentary film which makes me cry and be happy at the same time.’

‘A wonderful medium through which the mystery and fear of hospice admission and care can be alleviated. The power of music shines through and the joy of participation was obvious.’

‘Very powerful film. One of the best docs on this subject I have seen. One of the best docs I have seen.’

‘A beautifully crafted, touching, and deeply personal account of this place and people. The music and humour carried the film, as indeed this is what also gives the characters their strength. FANTASTIC WORK.’

‘Using song as a way of communicating deep feeling was very successful.’

‘A very inspirational film. Singing is pure medicine for the soul.’

‘Very profound and brilliant film – made me more aware of all the power and potentiality of documentary filmmaking.’

‘It’s about life as well as death. And the voice through singing – by which we can know we exist and are alive – and the power of music and lyrics to speak to the soul.’

‘I wept a lot but feel the music and special people in the film left me uplifted and hopeful for a great end of the life journey – for myself and others I love.’

07 / REFERENCES

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Hardie, A., *The Edge of Dreaming*. Feature documentary 2010, Ch4, POV. Translated into 14 languages. POV listing.

<http://www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk>

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/watch/edgeofdreaming/>

Hardie, A., *Seven Songs for a Long Life*. Feature documentary 2015, BBC, POV. POV listing.

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<http://archive.pov.org/sevensongs/film-description/>



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