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Music Healing Expert to Visit IWU

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Music Healing Expert to Visit IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--For those who are terminally ill, music can be a powerful tool in soothing spiritual and physical pain.

Therese Schroeder-Sheker, the founder of music-thanatology, a practice of using music to ease the pain of the dying, will visit Illinois Wesleyan University Wednesday, Oct. 18 and Thursday, Oct. 19. Schroeder-Sheker will provide three public lectures, as well as meet with students.

Schroeder-Sheker will begin her visit at Chapel with a presentation entitled, "Music in the Life of Spirit," at 11 a.m., Wednesday, Oct. 18 in Evelyn Chapel, 1301 N. Park St., Bloomington. Later that evening she will give a presentation geared toward health officials on music in the care of the dying called, "The Chalice of Repose Project," in the Shirk Center north classroom at 7:30 p.m., 302 E. Emerson St. The events are free and open to the public.

On Thursday, Oct. 19, Schroeder-Sheker will meet with IWU nursing students in classes. Later she will give a presentation called, "Monastic Medicine and Contemplative Musicianship in the Western Tradition" at 7:30 p.m. in Evelyn Chapel. The evening presentation and a following reception in the chapel are free and open to the public.

According to University Chaplain and Professor of Humanities and Archaeology Dennis Groh, "Death has, in most circles, stood for the opposite of healing and health. A person was either thought to be healing or dying. Therese Schroeder-Sheker and other music-thanalogists challenge that belief. They believe that the terminally ill person can experience healing of spirit, reduction of pain and a sense of peace, which are the fruits of a new spirituality."

Schroeder-Sheker said that she first became interested in music-thanatology 29 years ago when she saw people dying in great pain. She discovered that music could help them. "The turning point for me," Schroeder-Sheker said, "was when I was assigned to look over a man dying of emphysema, and I noticed how much pain he was in. I actually got into bed with him, held him, and sang songs until he died. That's when I first witnessed how music could help the dying."

Schroeder-Sheker's visit is co-sponsored by the IWU Humanities Program, Chaplain's Office, IWU School of Nursing and the Bloomington/Normal Area Healing Arts Network.

About Music-Thanatology and the Chalice of Repose Project

Music-thanatology is a subjective practice with a clinical application. It is the process of delivering personalized music at the bedside of patients. The purpose is to help relieve the emotional, physical and spiritual pain of the dying and their loved ones.

The Chalice of Repose Project is an organization that practices music-thanatology. Its mission is to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the dying as well as their loved ones. The group also tries to educate clinicians, health-care providers and the public about the possibility of a healing death.

Founded by Schroeder-Sheker at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, Mont., the practitioners attend death vigils and play music suited to the needs of the patients. Practitioners position themselves on both sides of the patient's bed, and play music to help the patient in the painful process of dying.

The practitioners pay close attention to physiological changes in the patient's nervous, respiratory, circulatory and metabolic systems, and change their music to accompany the adjustments in the patient. According to the Chalice of Repose Project, its work has proven effective in helping to reduce the pain experienced by patients with cancer, respiratory and infectious diseases, Alzheimer's and multiple sclerosis.

In addition to helping the dying, Schroeder-Sheker claims that the Chalice of Repose Project helps the family members as well. "We receive many testimonial letters from loved ones. Although the experience is meant for the dying ones, the loved ones appreciate the fact that their family member died peacefully. That can be very comforting." Shroeder-Sheker added, "When it is a good death, it affects everyone in the community, not just the dying."

About Therese Schroeder-Sheker

Schroeder-Sheker maintains dual careers in music and palliative medicine. She is a composer, harpist and singer. An international concert and recording artist, Schroeder-Sheker made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1980, and has played in centers for the performing arts, cathedrals and monasteries in eight countries over three continents. She also has four solo recordings as well as ten guest artist performances.

Schroeder-Sheker is academic dean of the School of Music-Thanatology at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, Mont., where she brings 29 years of experience in care for the dying. Schroeder-Sheker spent 19 years working at various Denver hospitals, where she also served concurrently as program chair of Regis University and later worked in pastoral care at the graduate school of theology at St. Thomas Theological Seminary.

Over the years, Schroeder-Sheker has received many honors from the arts, sciences and humanities communities. The awards include an Emmy, gold record, Gabriel Award, New York Open Center Award and first place in video documentary at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

About Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls more than 2000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million

science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium. Construction is underway on a \$26 million library and a \$6 million student center.