

# Will You Remember Me?

A film by Will Dowler  
12 minutes, US, 2023  
Language: English

## CONTACT

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# PRODUCTION SPECS

## Genre

Documentary Drama

## Year of Production

2023

## Total Running Time

00:12:40

## Aspect Ratio

4:3

## Shooting Format

4K BRAV and 4K 422 h.264

## Production Timeline

Preproduction: September – October 2022

Production: October 2022, January 2023

Post Production: January – May 2023

# SYNOPSIS

## <20 Words

A deeply personal and emotional witness to the final moments between a 100-year-old opera singer with Alzheimer's and her nurse.

## <75 Words

Colleen Cove has been caring for people with Alzheimer's all her life. Now in the 45th year of her career, the demands of her job are pulled into sharp focus at the bedside of her oldest patient, a 100-year-old opera singer named Lucille. In this deeply emotional witness to Lucille's final moments, Colleen reflects on her uniquely intimate relationship with death, and Lucille shares her gift with the world for the last time.

## Summary

Colleen Cove is checking on her patients in the memory care unit during dinner service when she finds something isn't right with one of her Alzheimer's patients, Lucille. She calls Lucille's daughter, Jane, to voice her biggest concern for Lucille's health: she isn't singing anymore. Lucille spent her life singing opera, so once she stopped singing and becoming less lucid, it indicated to Colleen that Lucille is likely going to pass away soon. She's agitated and crying for her mother, and Colleen does her best to bring her peace.

But Lucille isn't Colleen's only patient. The floor is fully booked and understaffed, and since Colleen can't always be there for Lucille, she is forced to make some difficult decisions at a crucial time.

What happens next is a collision of nature and the human spirit in the only story of its kind.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"My aunt Colleen first started working in nursing homes when she was sixteen. Now in the 45th year of her career, I set out to understand why she does it and how she continues to work despite the challenging circumstances. What happens when everyone you are assigned to care for inevitably dies from a terminal brain disease? What kind of emotional toll does that have on a person? How does she process all of the suffering that gets put on her? It all seems too overwhelming for one person to bear. This project began as an investigation to find answers for those questions, and through the process, an unexpected story of two humans emerged: a story of empathy, generosity, service, and connection. By complete chance, the film contains rare moments with Colleen and her oldest patient, Lucille, that are wholly unique and can never be recreated. The process of dying from dementia is presented nakedly for us to witness. It proves that—despite all that is unknown about dementia—the emotional parts of our brains remain active until the very end. On a deeply personal level, it dignifies and immortalizes Lucille's final expression of her identity. Throughout it all, Colleen reveals the answers to my original questions, and we understand her as a flawed, complex, and ultimately inspirational person doing her best to improve an imperfect world.

"The journey of making this film pushed me through an existential crisis full of doubts and fears and anxieties tied to dementia and memory in general. Many times I was left wondering, "What will we leave behind after we're gone?" and, "Will any of that matter if nobody remembers?" All of this informed the title, *Will You Remember Me?*"

- Will Dowler

## Q&A with DIRECTOR WILL DOWLER

### **What is your connection to the subjects in the film?**

Will Dowler: Colleen Cove is my aunt. Though we lived in different states, I would always look forward to seeing her at family get-togethers because I look up to her as an exceptionally caring and refreshing member of my family. Often she would open up about her work to their family, and hearing about it made me curious. Listening to Colleen speak about dementia from her perspective as a nurse of 45 years both fascinated and scared me. Part of my motivation for serving her story with this film was to advance her mission of putting the “care” in “healthcare,” and the other part was a way for me to reconcile my own fears about losing my memories, my identity, and my relationships.

Colleen introduced our crew to Lucille four days before she passed away. Having outlived all of her children (except for one daughter, Jane, with whom she had a fractured relationship), Lucille remained in the care of Colleen’s nursing home until the end. Witnessing their relationship in Lucille’s final days and hearing Colleen reflect on life and loss brought me the peace that I set out to find, and it is my hope that their story can be equally cathartic for others affected by someone in their life with dementia.

### **What was your production timeline like?**

Will Dowler: The idea for this project has been years in the making, and it started to become real around summer 2022 when I visited Colleen in Massachusetts and toured the nursing home where she works. Concept development began with the workshopping of a series of treatments that each addressed the central idea from different angles. The first shoot lasted only two days in mid-October and the second shoot lasted three days in early January 2023. With over 40 hours of footage to process, editing took four months, and the finishing touches with sound, color, and graphics took another month. Overall, the production time frame took about 10 months and the film was more or less completed by June 2023.

**Where was the documentary filmed?**

Will Dowler: The entire project was shot on location in Massachusetts. The nursing home and Colleen's home are both in the small town of Medway.

**For an observational-style documentary, you must have had some unexpected things happen. How did the story evolve throughout production?**

Will Dowler: The detail that surprises most people is that Lucille almost wasn't included in the film at all. At first, the film was still going to be centered on Colleen and her work, but the topic of dementia care was going to be explored in a much broader scope and broken down in a more analytical way. When we went for our October shoot, Lucille wasn't even in the nursing home—she was being treated at a hospital down the road. It wasn't until the January shoot that Lucille came back and Colleen wanted to introduce us because of her remarkable talent. Since she spent her life as an opera singer, that part of her brain remained very active despite her dementia, and although she hadn't said a word as long as Colleen had known her, she would often spontaneously burst into song. The way Colleen described it, it was like Lucille would appear lucid and much more like herself when she was singing. So we thought, "Ah-ha! That's our story: the power of music in dementia care." So we go into Lucille's room, and Colleen sits by her side, holds her hand, and begins to sing a little tune to see if she'll sing along, and she doesn't. I'm confused, my crew is confused, but Colleen senses something that none of us immediately picked up on: Lucille is beginning to transition. And so the story pivoted again, this time to address Colleen's relationship with just one patient, and through that relationship we could explore how Colleen struggles to balance the contradictions of her job in an understaffed and underfunded nursing home when something so major like the death of a dear patient is on the line. Death is inescapable in Colleen's work, and her personal relationship with death added another layer to the story since she lost her husband some years ago, plus, in Colleen's 45-year career, she's seen just about every type of dementia and what it can do to you, so she has these very specific fears that most people can't even fathom. And so what you see in the film is Colleen's attempts to ease Lucille's distress and bring her peace, but at the same time she's also trying to find some peace of mind for herself. When Lucille sings her last song, that for me is the cathartic release that answers all of the questions that come from the intersection of all of these layers. It's just pure emotion.

## FILMMAKER BIOS

### Will Dowler, Director

Will Dowler is an award-winning filmmaker, artist, and entrepreneur based in Brooklyn, NY. He studied film at Syracuse University and the Savannah College of Art & Design with a concentration in documentary. Through time-based media and installations, his art explores the enduring themes of loss, hope, and change as evident in his debut short film, *Will You Remember Me?*, a deeply personal and emotional witness to the final moments between a 100-year-old opera singer with Alzheimer's and her nurse. His company, Montamat, is the creative extension of himself that he operates with his close friends and collaborators. He has a BFA in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

### Julia Moran, Producer

Julia Moran is an award-winning producer and documentarian from South Florida. She was selected for "Best Female Producer" at the Toronto International Women's Festival and won the "Outstanding Achievement Award" for Best Producer at IndieX Film Festival for her short, *Vagabond* (2022) which has received over 20 awards and official selections from various international festivals. She has a BFA in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

### Dakota Callicott, Director of Photography

Dakota Callicott is an award-winning cinematographer based in Oregon whose work ranges from fictional narrative to fashion film to documentary. He has a BFA in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

### Val Higgins, Editor

Val Higgins is an award-winning editor and producer based in Georgia. She received a student Emmy for *Beginnings of a Comic Book Artist* (2019), and her documentary short *Chalk Back* (2022) was an official selection at the Atlanta Women's Film Festival. She has a BFA in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design.



# CREDITS

## CREW

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Director                | Will Dowler          |
| Producer                | Julia Moran          |
| Director of Photography | Dakota Callicott     |
| Editor                  | Val Higgins          |
| Sound Designer          | Jacob Braxton        |
| Assistant Editor        | Amelia Violet Prouse |
| <br>                    |                      |
| B Camera Operator       | Julia Moran          |
| Colorist                | Dakota Callicott     |
| Composer                | Jacob Braxton        |
| Sound Recordist         | Will Dowler          |

## FEATURING

Colleen Cove  
Lucille Olson

## CO-FEATURING

Lucille Arcand  
Marie Carmichael  
Patrick Cove  
Paul Cove  
Barbara Hardy  
Paul LaMontagne  
Abby O'Sullivan  
Marley O'Sullivan  
Attilio Pannone  
Raymonde Savoie  
Anna Scalia

## HEARTFELT GRATITUDE

Ryan Adams  
Maya Bauer  
Christopher Brannan  
Billy W. Braxton  
Michael Chaney  
Chelsea & Preston Callicott  
Connie Cummings  
Mara & Stephen Dowler  
Clare Dubé  
Violet Halvorson  
Herman Higgins  
Sedika Mojadidi  
Clayton L. Moran Jr.  
Jane Olson  
John & Patricia O'Shea  
Kari Sgourakes  
Dana Shockley  
Katherine Tobin

Medway Country Manor Skilled Nursing and Rehab  
The Provident Foundation

*Come Walk Among The Stars*  
Written by Winston O. Abbott  
Recited by Colleen Cove

**SCAD**  
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a  
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production

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