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and confirmed the diagnosis of COPD (chronic obstructive airways disease). Further workup showed hyperinflated lungs, but nil else. She was treated with long-acting bronchodilators, vaccinations for pneumonia and influenza, and advice on exercise to improve her lung function. Over a period of months, she was improved all round, with improved CAT scores, spirometry, and effort tolerance.

COPD is a diagnosis most of us do not think of. I recall years ago asking a friend who has a clinic in a semi-industrial area to help screen for COPD in his area. "Huh? I have never seen COPD in my practice, don't have *lah*." Indeed. We have studies in the past which estimated that our COPD rates in Singapore are 3.5%.<sup>1</sup>

However, recent local population surveys revealed that 26% of Chinese males over the age of 55 have evidence of COPD.<sup>2</sup>

Globally there is much evidence of the effects of indoor air pollution (IAP) leading to COPD.<sup>3,4</sup> Perhaps my "auntie" developed her COPD from her exposure to the smoke in her youth. Studies have shown that sustained exposures to IAP during childhood predisposes the developing juvenile

lungs to develop COPD. It is time we relook at COPD in our community, think about the possibilities, make the diagnosis, and treat.

It's out there, we just need to look out for it!

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Regional COPD Working Group. COPD prevalence in 12 Asia-Pacific countries and regions: Projections based on the COPD prevalence estimation model. *Respirology*. 2003 Jun;8(2):192-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ng TP. Epidemiology of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). *Singapore Family Physician*. Vol 39(2) Apr-June 2013 p 8-10

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health> accessed 6 January 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Kurmi OP, Semple S, Simkhada P, et al. COPD and chronic bronchitis risk of indoor air pollution from solid fuel: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Thorax* 2010;65:221-228

CM

## Interview with Behrad Gorgani

Interviewed by Dr Tan Li Wen Terence, Editorial Board Member

### College Mirror (CM):

Hi Behrad, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. To start off, can I ask how you got started in Lutherie?

### Behrad Gorgani (BG):

Hi Dr Tan, thank you so much for taking your time interviewing me.

This is an interesting question. I really don't know how it all happened, I was studying to get my bachelor's degree in Graphic Design at OCAD University. While there I was introduced to master luthier Phillip Davis, who was teaching guitar and violin construction in the university's woodshop. At the time I was still learning to play the guitar and the idea of making my own guitar was very exciting. So I started to make my first guitar with Phil's guidance and before I knew it I was working at the woodshop as a student technician as well as helping Phil with his class. Right there and then I knew that building guitars is something I'm really interested in.

### CM:

Wonderful! And how has the journey been so far?



Behrad Gorgani

### BG:

I would say it has been a very steep uphill journey, but certainly a rewarding one. I have had my instruments played on the BBC stage, used to record award-winning movie soundtracks. I've also had the amazing opportunity to teach instrument construction at the Art and Design University here in Toronto.

### CM:

Could you tell a little more about the instruments you build and the teaching you do?

### BG:

Sure, My background in design has taught me to always ask questions and try to solve problems. Since my early guitars, I've always experimented with more modern construction methods, such as multi-layered sides/ linings, to be able to create a more structurally stable instrument. Later after a couple of years of building and experimenting on my own, I decided to improve my understanding of guitars by studying with master luthiers, Sergei De Jonge, and Trevor Gore.

Sergei De Jonge taught me how to design simple yet musically powerful instruments. Trevor coming from an engineering background showed me tools and methods for

accurately calculating the sounds of my instruments so I would be able to reproduce the results from one guitar to another.

These are the same concepts I try to teach to my students. Our program at the University focuses on deconstructing a musical instrument, figuring out how each part is fabricated and trying to build an instrument focusing on one component at a time. This way they are not bombarded with a massive amount of new information at once and the result is a higher success rate.

**CM:**

I see! What would a typical day in your professional life look like?

**BG:**

It depends on my work schedule at the university. If I'm working there I would typically do small jobs in the shop or plan and prepare parts to be worked on the next day. In general, I would go to the shop, respond to emails, plan the next stages of the builds, work on my own guitars and if there are any repair jobs I would work on those as well, then head over to the university. Most of my classes are in the evening.

**CM:**

And could you enlighten us on the process involved in making a guitar and how long it takes to craft one

**BG:**

Sure, for me the process of designing a guitar starts with understanding what it exactly the client is looking for. Perhaps a certain species of wood, maybe a different neck measurement, from there I would start selecting materials and plan the build before I cut any materials to size and shape. Each guitar takes me about 120-150 hours, not necessarily 150 working hours, some of that is the time it takes for the glue to dry and the varnish to cure.

Usually, I start by building the body, then I move on to the neck and from there I would work on preparing the

guitar for finishing, prep work is the most important part in making sure the instrument will look as good as it will sound. After finishing it is down to fine-tuning and setting up to have the strings on for the first time.

**CM:**

What would you say was the most challenging part of building a guitar?

**BG:**

For me, the most challenging part of the guitar making isn't just one step or process but rather building a balanced instrument tonally as well as ergonomically.

I find that the weight ratio of the neck material is crucial in designing and building an instrument. Too heavy of a neck and the player would have to fight the gravity.

**CM:**

How about the most enjoyable?

**BG:**

This is an interesting question, I would assume almost every luthier would say the most enjoyable part for them would be stringing up one of their guitars for the first time. While that's always an exciting moment for me, the part I enjoy the most is making the top, installing the rosette and bracing are two steps in guitar making I really enjoy. Top bracing defines the tonal character of an instrument, therefore, I would give it the most attention.

**CM:**

I see! What would you think are the main differences between a hand-built guitars compared to a high-end factory instrument?

**BG:**

These days there are really good guitars coming out of factories, in terms of look, feel and playability. Unfortunately, those guitars - because of how fast they are being produced, have not had the level of attention given to them when it comes to shaping parts to optimize the sound.

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Images courtesy of Behrad Gorgani

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I personally have had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study with master luthier Trevor Gore. Trevor comes from an engineering background, over the years he has managed to find ways to scientifically measure the different elements and how they shape the sound effects of a guitar.

I try to implement his methods in every instrument I make. I try to measure material elasticity in order to figure out the optimum thicknesses to get the best sound of instruments as well as be able to reproduce those results.

**CM:**

Do you have any favourite woods to work with?

**BG:**

I do, red cedar over wenge is my favourite combo. The other one would be Swiss Spruce over Katalox.

**CM:**

And why do you think the woods make such a difference to the sound of a guitar?

**BG:**

Good question, the more guitars I make the more I realize that it's not necessarily the species of wood that affects the sound but rather the properties and characteristics of the particular pieces I use in each guitar.

During my studies with Trevor I learned that I can measure the material properties and build my guitars to specific target numbers to get the sound I desire out of my instruments.

This in theory sounds straightforward but it actually is not. Based on the type of instrument I'm making and the client's requests I would measure a few different sets and try to find the one that fits best for our project. This is a very crucial step for me as I've pretty much determined the tonal characteristics of the guitar.

**CM:**

So would how much would you say the tone is due to the wood and how much is due to the builder?

**BG:**

Well that's a difficult question to answer. It's a mixture of both. A good builder should be able to make a great sounding guitar regardless of the materials.

**CM:**

Thank you for your time Behrad, before we let you go, can I ask if you had any advice for anyone exploring the idea of a handmade guitar?

**BG:**

Thank you for taking your time interviewing me. I would suggest they do their research and study the different guitar maker's build philosophy. I often get clients asking me to build a guitar similar to someone else's, while I can technically do that, it may not be a very successful project. In my opinion it's best to allow the luthier build with their own philosophy.

■ CM

## Intimacy and Sexuality Workshop 2019

### Mind Body Interest Group

by Dr Jean-Jasmin Lee FCFP(S), FECSM  
Associate Consultant, Family Medicine Service, KKWCH

2019 kicked off to a roaring start with the College of Family Physicians (CFPS) holding its first ever workshop for the new Mind Body Interest Group (MBIG).

This is the brainchild of former College President A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean who strongly believes that psychosocial dimensions are integral to the holistic management of patients in family medicine (FM). There is now increasingly more family physicians (FPs) that are now formally trained and accredited in various psychosocial settings of FM e.g. continuing care, palliative care and sexual health etc. The MBIG hopes to engender interest in FPs as well as gain recognition from patients, colleagues and others for the expertise.

The speakers were A/Prof Cheong, Dr Ang Seng Bin, Dr Angela Tan and myself. A/Prof Cheong obtained his Masters

in professional counselling in 2004 and wrote his first book called 'Counselling within the Consultation' in 2015 together with A/Prof Goh Lee Gan and Dr Ong Chooi Peng. They subsequently published a second book, 'The Extended Consultation, Mind Matters!' in 2017. Dr Ang Seng Bin, Dr Angela Tan and myself trained in sexual medicine with the European School of Sexual Medicine, which runs an annual training course in Budapest. Subsequently we passed our fellowship exam in 2018 in Lisbon, which gave us the qualifications of Fellows of the European Board of Sexual Medicine (FECSM). Dr Ang and myself run menopause and osteoporosis clinics at KKWCH. We also manage women and their partners with sexual problems in the multidisciplinary Sexual Health Clinic. Dr Angela Tan is a private GP who is a trained Life coach. She juggles making house visits for geriatric and palliative care services for the