

# The *Singing* Doctors

by Dr Hirantha Ariyadasa, MMed(Family Medicine) College Programme B student

*The College had invited Dr Hirantha and his band to perform at the World Family Doctors' Day dinner held on 25th May 2019 at the ParkRoyal on Pickering hotel. The audience and this editorial board were so impressed by the performance that we asked Dr Hirantha to write this piece.*

My name is Hirantha Ariyadasa. I am a medical doctor by profession and work as a Resident Physician at Bright Vision Community Hospital, Singapore. I'm also a trainee in the Masters Programme in Family Medicine at the College of Family Physicians Singapore.

## Music – Creative De-stressing

It's quite a stressful and demanding profession to be in and music has always given me an avenue to destress as well as to channel my creativity. It's not always that you get to simultaneously pursue two entirely different paths that you are passionate about and bring a smile to someone's face. I'm fortunate to be able to do that with my medical profession and music career.

## My Band

Suran Kuruppu and Gananath Dassanayaka are my other two band members, who are also medical doctors by profession. Dr. Suran is a Resident Physician at Changi General Hospital's Anesthesiology Department. Dr. Gananath is a family physician by training. He is based in Sri Lanka at the moment as Head of Quality Assurance at Asiri Group of Hospitals.

Suran and I have been friends since we were in secondary school. We used to spend a lot of time singing and playing music after school those days and soon realized that our voices and guitar blended very well. We met Gananath during our first year of medical school and he made a great addition to us.

What started out as a simple pastime, quickly became a passion for the three of us. We started discussing taking this a step further and started playing as a band in 5-star venues back in Sri Lanka. This was an unexpected twist to see three medical students pursuing music, and we were received very well by our audience at the time.

All three of us have been introduced to music at a very young age with formal training and it has been an important part of our lives growing up. I think this is one of the



*Dr Hirantha Ariyadasa playing the cajon.*

main reasons why we have chosen to pursue it even after becoming medical professionals. Suran and I have always been very fond of American folk and country music. We both value the tunes originated during the 1960s -1980s. Simon and Garfunkel, James Taylor, Cat Stevens, and The Beatles are some of our musical heroes. Gananath, on the other hand, is a fan of old school Jazz music. Frank Sinatra is his biggest inspiration.

## Our Early Music Career

I started my musical career as a violinist and vocalist when I was 11 years old. Later on, I developed an affinity towards percussion instruments and I learnt the acoustic drums and the Cajon on my own. Suran has been trained in western classical guitar and both of us have also

been in the same choir at one point. Gananath started out as a vocalist and a Jazz saxophonist, and he has specialized in old school Jazz music.

## Performing Music

We have played at numerous 5-star venues for quite a number of years now - from hotels, pubs, cocktail parties and weddings to corporate events and even 5-star hotels overseas. I think this is where we got our first exposure to professional performance, to really understand the audience and how to entertain them with our musical skills. With all the amazing reviews and responses we got, this gave us the confidence to take live performance to the next level.

Since then, we have participated in many concerts and we have even had our own concert in Sri Lanka in 2011, which was a tremendous success.

Over the years, we have also been able to individually gain performance experience at different levels. With Gananath's special interest in old school Jazz music, he has had 5 sellout concerts with another Jazz band, while Suran has backed up for many live TV shows. All these experiences have helped us to elevate our performance today as a band.

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All images courtesy of Dr Hirantha Ariyadasa

We like to feature people with different musical talents that may complement what we do as musicians. This helps us to provide something different and vibrant to our audience each time. We do charge a nominal performance fee. But all our gig proceeds are donated to charities.

We love experimenting with music from other cultures and different genres. Music is an infinitely creative process and this helps us to creatively explore different dimensions influenced by the vibrancy of different cultures. I believe this will help us to continuously evolve as musicians and to continue to deliver something new and fresh for our audience.

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- At least 5 years post housemanship experience

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