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Dr. Jorge Camara  
About the new Laser Tear Duct Center



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Dr. Arthur Harvey played classical music on an electric piano at St. Francis Medical Center's new Laser Tear Duct Center yesterday as Dr. Jorge Camara, in colorful hat, operated on patient Benjamin Semana's blocked tear duct and Dr. Samuel Wong observed at right. Wong, the Honolulu Symphony's outgoing music director, is also an ophthalmologist.

# Play it again, Doc

## Music and medicine come together for healing in a new laser eye center

By Helen Altton  
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Eye-surgery patient Benjamin Semana went to sleep under anesthesia yesterday listening to Dr. Samuel Wong, the Honolulu Symphony's outgoing music director, play Bach and Beethoven on an electric piano in the operating room.

The unique, musical setup at the St. Francis Medical Center-Liliha is part of the hospital's new Laser Tear Duct Center, which will be used for all kinds of eye surgery.

Wong, who is also an ophthalmologist, stopped playing to observe Dr. Jorge G. Camara perform laser surgery on Semana for a blocked tear duct. But the live piano performance continued with Dr. Arthur Harvey, University of Hawaii music professor and researcher, at the keyboard.

While Camara had help yesterday from guest musicians, he's a classically trained pianist, as well as a surgeon, and he plans to play for patients while they undergo and awaken from anesthesia.

"I could hear it in the background," Camara said after Semana's operation. "It relaxed me. To have a live pianist is an awesome experience, and to have Dr. Wong by my side is incredible."

The Laser Tear Duct Center was blessed yesterday by the Rev. Joe Specht, the hospital's chaplain.

Camara said he used it Monday for the first time, playing piano for four patients before and after the operations. He also played two hours of taped piano music during the procedures. "I can't tell you how delighted they were."

He said he knows of no other operating room in the world dedicated to laser surgery on blocked tear ducts and equipped with a piano, in this case a Roland electronic intelligent piano.

Leovi Vizcarra, registered nurse in charge of ophthalmology service, said the music "will help and benefit everybody, especially the patient. ... We have a lot of elderly patients. It will help them especially when they go to sleep.

"Now we have the piano, I'm thinking of bringing my guitar," she joked.

Harvey and Wong, both advocates of the power of music to heal, are excited about the laser center.

### Medical benefits of music

**What:** Pan-Pacific Conference on Music and Healing  
**Who:** Distinguished speakers and performers  
**When:** 2 to 6 p.m. tomorrow at the new John A. Burns School of Medicine at Kakaako, and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday at the Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall.  
**Suggested donation:** \$100 per person.  
**Sponsor:** Dr. Samuel Wong's Global Music Healing Institute

"It's one step higher than done before," said Harvey, who has written and taught music for mental and physical therapy for about 45 years.

Camara said he asked Semana, 73, about his musical tastes, and his patient said anything he chose would be fine.

"We are so blessed to have this opportunity to blend technological advances in medicine with age-old values in music," Camara said, noting many studies have documented the benefits of music for health.



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Dr. Arthur Harvey played "Blue Hawaii" for Cecilia Zuniga and nurse Leovi Bizcarra after surgery was completed yesterday in St. Francis Medical Center's new Laser Tear Duct Center operating room.



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Dr. Arthur Harvey, standing, was among the musical medical trio helping to launch the center along with Dr. Jorge Camara and Dr. Samuel Wong.

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"Thank God for my father who forced me to play (the piano)," he added with a laugh.

Wong said the music/surgery center is "such a good idea" he'd like to adopt it when he joins Columbia University's department of ophthalmology.

Wong said music can increase a person's sense of well-being and security and "has the power to transform the patient into another zone of consciousness."

Camara noted that in some countries the surgical rooms are called "operating theater."

He said many studies have shown benefits of classical music to healing and medicine, including lowering the blood pressure and heart rate and reducing the need for medications before and after surgery.

"This will benefit everybody, the patient, surgeon and staff and it adds a personal touch," he said. "It is high-tech, but it should be high touch. We are blending both of those."

The old way of correcting blocked tear ducts was to create a passageway with an incision, said Dr. Efred Baria, anesthesiologist. "Now, he does it from inside the nose and you don't see it. The patient recovers so fast he (or she) can go to work the next day."

Since 1993, Camara has pioneered in development of the noninvasive procedure for blocked tear ducts, performed through the nose with a tiny endoscopic camera lens.

Camara has lectured and written extensively about the technique, which he has improved in stages. He received an award for his work from the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

He said more than 500,000 doctor visits in the nation are due to blocked tear ducts.

Most of the time the symptoms are "a nuisance," he said, including excessive tearing, discharge from the eyes and eyelids sticking together. But pus and abscesses can form with serious consequences, he said.

Some operations can be difficult because of a narrow passage into the nose, possible bleeding or other problems, Camara said.

But yesterday's procedure went well, he said.

"I feel having the piano here and the ability to be both a musician and healer to patients is a great blessing," Camara said. "We welcome other ophthalmologists who enjoy music to come here."