



Hi Tim,

Thanks for another great issue of *American Lutherie* (Winter 2015), which I have read, as always, with great interest. In particular I applaud the article by Garston and Walraet describing the work of the Leonardo Guitar Research Project which compares by various methods a series of classical guitars, built to the same design, with various "nontropical" (familiar, northern, readily available, nonthreatened) species of hardwoods for their backs and sides.

The project used good scientific methods to determine whether skilled players and listeners could discern the difference between guitars made with the alternate "nontropical" species and those made using typical species for back and sides (in this case Indian rosewood, *Dalbergia latifolia*). The primary testing means were blind, similar to methods used by R.M. Motolla to investigate a guitar with and without soundports in *AL* #96. The Leonardo Guitar Research Project gathered very many data during their testing, which strengthens the confidence in the findings.

And the primary finding was: People generally can't tell the difference between back-and-side woods for well-made guitars. This certainly conforms to my experience. The other finding of strong interest is that preference shifted strongly to familiar, "classic" materials when the listeners were tested "not-blind" — they got non-audio cues to the makeup of the instrument. And these findings conform with the findings in *AL* #96.

This is good science. Bravo, the Leonardo Project! I am heartened to read that they will be continuing this work and expanding its scope. I will certainly be going to their website to see the raw data and the data analysis.

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Hi Deb,

Another great issue! I am so glad to see these articles on fine Canadian luthiers.

I only met Sergei DeJonge once, in the early 1980s. It was a memorable meeting. I had a friend at the University of Toronto who actually had the disposable income to commission guitars for his own use. He had a few by Sergei. What was really noteworthy is that they were all really unusual one-off instruments. One was an 8-string classical. Another was a 10-string classical. Yet another was an 8-string classical with an extended harp neck and (I think) eleven extra bourdons.

There were a healthy number of fine luthiers in the Toronto area, but not many whom I recall as being terribly experimental. What really impressed me about those guitars was that, as wild as they seemed, they were all so well executed. They all sounded good, and all played really well. And they all had fine structural integrity. That last one was a biggie as Toronto, with its frigid, dry winters and hot, muggy summers, was "the land of popped-off guitar bridges!"

Anyhow, after a few calls to Sergei, he invited me out to his shop. It was in an old run-down roadside motor hotel overlooking Lake Ontario on Lakeshore Blvd. Back in the day,

before they built a major multilane highway, "the Lakeshore" was the major thoroughfare to the westside cottages. Sergei and his family lived in the front part where the original hotel owner must have lived. Each of the rooms that strung along the length of the hotel was dedicated to one aspect of lutherie or another, such as wood storage, power tools, and so on. So, beyond the quality of his instruments, with which I was already familiar, I discovered a guy who had put a lot of thought and organization into making this a thriving vocation. That was a big deal to someone making a meager income teaching guitar!

Sergei explained his building methodology and sequence as we walked from room to room. After a while, sensing my deeper-than-typical interest, he asked me if I'd like to sign up for his guitar making class. Had he not caught me between semesters in the midst of completing a very difficult degree program, I would have jumped right for it! It was one of those "what if" moments that you occasionally look back on in life. Nonetheless, my encounter with Sergei and his guitars was a huge influence.

Best Regards,
Jim Buckland
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Dear GAL,

I know that lute makers must be only a very small percentage of the Guild's membership, yet I am hoping that making the presence of The Lute Society of America's lute rental program known to your members might be helpful.

The Lute Society of America has a lute rental program which offers a variety of different types of lutes and related instruments. This is an ideal solution for guitarists who wish to learn to play the lute but don't want to make the large investment in buying one to determine if they will like it. The program also provides rental instruments to luthiers who wish to study, copy, or use a lute or lute-family instrument for any reason. Those interested in learning more or wishing to rent a lute may contact me at the e-mail address below.

Michael M. Grant
Director, Lute Rental Program
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www.lutesocietyofamerica.org

Dear Guild,

I read every issue cover to cover and have done so for many years now. Each year I just love displaying my little certificate in my guitar shop. I know for a lot of the members this seems silly, but I'm very proud to be a member.

Regards,
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