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ACCENT

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Pianist Aryo Wicaksono has been busy performing, writing and making debuts

Among his recent endeavors, Aryo Wicaksono made his debut in Russia with the St. Petersburg State Academy Symphony Orchestra in a sold-out performance.

Young man is old-school

Editor's note: This summer, we are taking a look at some of the Tucsonans who make the arts such a vivid reality for us. Today, Aryo Wicaksono, a quiet, unassuming man until he sits at the keys of a piano.

By Cathalena E. Burch

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

In a letter earlier this summer to his OMA — Opening Minds Through the Arts — colleagues, pianist Aryo Wicaksono ticked off a list of recent accomplishments:

► Sold-out debut in Russia with the St. Petersburg State Academy Symphony Orchestra. He played Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto.

► Smattering of well-received Tucson concerts last spring.

► Successful world-premiere performance of Ananda Sukarlan's "Love and Variations" written for his Swara Sonora Trio (Wicaksono, Kathryn Mueller and Nathan Krueger).

► Debut of composition he co-wrote with soprano Allison Lasley-Sanders by the fringe dance/theater troupe Teatro Jaguar Luna on its U.S. tour.

And then he ticked off what lies ahead:

► An encore date in Russia during next summer's Stars of the White Nights festival to perform either Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto or Tchaikovsky's First.

► Debut recital with the Embassy Series in Washington, D.C., in early December.

IF YOU GO

Aryo Wicaksono is playing piano for the Live Theatre Workshop production of "I Do! I Do!" Performances are 7:30 Thursdays through Saturdays, and 3 p.m. Sundays, through Aug. 24 at Live Theatre, 5317 E. Speedway. Tickets are \$19, with discounts available. 327-4242.



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► New York City recital this fall.

► A recital in San Diego in early November.

► Another in Bisbee Dec. 6 and 7.

► A concerto gig with the Civic Orchestra of Tucson Feb 14.

"As of right now, I want to do a combination of things — performing, teaching and composing," the enthusiastic University of Arizona graduate gushed earlier this month.

The 25-year-old, who has UA bachelor's and master's degrees, said he sees himself combining teaching and performing for a well-rounded professional career that satisfies all his loves.

He also wants to expand on his foray into composing, which until now, he says, has been mostly incidental music like the tunes he wrote for Teatro Jaguar Luna.

A native of Indonesia, Wicaksono came to the U.S. 10 years ago with his mother, who was sent by the World Health Organization to California to study at the University of Southern California. When she was finished, his mom returned to Indonesia, where she is a pharmacist; his dad is a civil engineer. The young Wicaksono decided to stay in the States for school, picking the UA.

"The scholarship was good, but at the same time Nicholas Zumbro was a very good teacher. The lineage of his teachers — I liked his tradition. After he retired, I continued with Tannis Gibson."

In an interview after returning from his July trip to Russia, Wicaksono talked about lessons learned abroad and his career goals.

What lessons did you learn in Russia?

"The way that their musicians rehearse and their enthusiasm. It's amazing. It was the (Stars of the) White Nights festival and it was intense. (Conductor Valery) Gergiev wanted everything to be performed only once. All of this group of orchestras would rehearse and at night they would perform it and they would come in at 8 o'clock in the morning and do it again. The level of engagement, even though it's so intense and tiring, the level of musicality — is astounding. It's also humbling. . . . The thing I learned a lot is that whatever you do you have to do your best. That's the big thing I learned."

What was it like playing Russian music for a Russian audience?

Check out Aryo

Wicaksono as he plays Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D flat Major with the St. Petersburg State Academy Symphony Orchestra at the Straight From the Art blog. azstarnet.com/accnet.



ning. This was the first time that I played a concert in a hall with 500 seats and there were no seats unfilled. Three days before when I start rehearsing, that was the most terrifying part. They didn't say anything. They didn't smile. Finally they opened up, but if they don't know you, that's how they are. At the end, I got to know a lot of them and they are very nice. . . . Finally I got to know some of them well, but the first time they were dead serious."

You got to play tourist a few days, right?

"Yes. I took a lot of pictures. I took my digital camera everywhere and took pictures of everything because I never knew if I was going back."

What is your career goal?

"It depends. So far, I'm doing things that they ask me. I'm also doing films for one of the UA film (instructors). . . . I'm not composing direct, abstract music like a symphony. I haven't had the training."

Is composing part of that goal?

"Hopefully. It's a big challenge. As a performer, when you compose the music, it ends up sounding like the music you are performing. You finish it and go, 'OK, that sounds like a (Samuel) Barber.'"

Is conducting an avenue you might pursue?

"Yes. I want to try that. . . . The more I soak all of this, the more I travel, it seems like it's also a must as a musician. Yes, as a musician you are a pianist, a flutist, or a string player. But I think more and more you have to be a composer, a conductor. Do a little of all things. I think it's part of the whole package; being a musician you have to be able to do a little of everything."

Are the days of just being a pianist gone?

"Yeah, I think even worldwide. I talked to some friends while I was in Europe. It's not about the demand in the market. It makes being a musician better. In Bach's time and Mozart's time, they did everything. It seems like we have to go back to a Renaissance and do everything."

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