

**Aryo  
Wicaksono,  
Piano, and  
Classical  
Music**

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Young pianist from Indonesia, Aryo Wicaksono, has been working in United States of America for a long time. He chose to walk on his musical career abroad. "I like the system and support toward art abroad, where artists can really work hard and succeed if they want to," he said.

Though American government's support for classic musical world is not as big as in Europe, and the environment is not as conducive as in Europe, yet Aryo felt challenged. That, according to him, pushed musicians and art workers to be able to innovate and to continue to be creative.

**Piano and Classical Music**

Aryo himself forget when was the first time he knew piano. "Since 5 or 4.5 years old. I don't remember myself," he said. He admitted, back then he had no dreams to be a musician. "I liked music, making songs, playing music, and improvising. But I had no basic knowledge in that field," said the pianist born in Surabaya, July 30, 1982, who is also skillful in playing organ.

After graduating from High School and studying music in Los Angeles, California, Aryo started to focus in musical art "That was a good start. I felt lucky to be able to learn from many teachers from various parts of the world. Me myself, started to join concerts when I was still a student," said the man who likes swimming and cycling.

On preference of music genre, Aryo focused on classical music. "Mostly I play classical music, starting from Baroque era to around 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. I'm also the pianist and music director for Broadway Musicals." Even so, he commented, in general musicians should be able to be flexible in learning various kinds and styles of music, of course suitable with their ability and willingness.

"In music, there are only two judgments: good music or bad music. Therefore, musicians need to learn and present good music, no matter what the genre is," Aryo elaborated.

### **Inspirations**

Aryo admitted, many pianists became his inspirations in creating. "The list is endless," he said. Due to the high number, he couldn't decide which one was his favorite. One thing for sure, he said, his living pianist idol is Martha Argerich.

"The way she plays is very interesting, mysterious, hard to be understood, but always has magnetic elements that draw people to enter her music. I'm very lucky to be able to watch her concerts often and to know her personally," said Aryo. Another pianist who became his inspiration was his current mentor, Dr. John Steele Ritter. Both of his parents are not forgotten in his inspirator list. "They gave me affection and attention, and taught me about good work ethics."

So far, according to Aryo, his debut concert in St. Petersburg, Russia, with St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, last June, was the most captivating one. "That was a fun learning experience because their orchestra group was very busy with their summer concert schedule. I had to practice effectively with them, only 20 minutes in maximum, and we only practiced twice!" he said.

## Tour Preparation to Indonesia

This year can be said as a busy year for Aryo. He just finished recording with soprano Elena Todd and flutist Sandy Schwoebel. "We recorded repertoires combining soprano, flute, and piano. It's still rare, but pleasant to listen to," said Aryo.

On previous September 9, with Swara Sonora Trio, a music group he formed with US singer AS Kathryn Mueller (soprano) and Nathan Krueger (baritone), his two teaching colleagues in "Opening Minds Through the Arts" program in Tucson Unified School District, he held a concert. The three of them performed *Love and Variations* by classical piano composer Ananda Sukarlan.

*Love and Variations*, consisted of eight songs, was composed based on poetries made by several artists from various countries, including from Indonesia such as Laksmi Pamuntjak (*Glass Conservatory*), Sapardi Djoko Damono (*Kukirimkan Padamu/I Send It To You*), and Joko Pinurbo (*Kekasihku/My Lover*).

Aside from busy preparing several concerts and solo recitals at the end of 2008, Aryo with Swara Sonora is also busy with fund raising plan through 2009 UNICEF Peace Tour concert in Indonesia, which is planned to be held in August Agustus 2009. In the charity tour, they will stop in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Bali.

## Expectations

Many achievements have been received by Aryo. Among others are Tucson Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Award, Arizona Symphony Orchestra Presidents Award, Green Valley Competition Award, Arizona Daily Star Mac Awards for Best Musical Production 2007 for "ELEGIES" Musical, and University of Arizona Honors College Alumni Fund Award. Even so, still considered himself green in this field.

"I want to be a better pianist, in every day. And hopefully, I can still teach, hold shows and solo recitals, also collaborate with other musicians in concerts," explained the holder of Masters of Music in Piano Performance from Arizona University.



About music, he has his own view. Two important things to be faced in musical world is organizational rule and public appreciation toward the music itself. "The real view on art and public's view on art and entertainment are different matters. What can be done by artists—either singers, pianists, or composers—is to try as best as they can to produce qualified music," he explained.

In general, he considered, aside from being able to present amazing shows and to teach, musicians also need to own abilities in business and administration field. "These are three different things, yet can make an artist or musician learn to develop himself as a good human being, artist, also performer and speaker," he said.

Aryo himself is ready with a line of concert schedule for next year. Before going to Indonesia with his trio group, he will hold concerts in Tucson, several cities in southwest part of US, Russia, and Spain.

To watch Aryo's show recording in YouTube, you can click here [sini](#).

#### Indonesia Full of Potential, Yet Lack of Support

"Indonesia has a tremendous musical potential!" said Aryo. Proven, he conveyed, by many big musicians who visited and fell in love with Indonesia. For example pianist Leopold Godowsky and Lili Kraus, also celloist Pablo Casals. "Indonesia is full of musical history and culture," he explained.

Aryo shared a story about a Polish pianist Leopold Godowsky who was very impressed with Indonesia's beauty. Indonesia inspired Godowsky to compose *Java Suite* consisted of four piano music books.

Another is Colin McPhee, an American-Canadian composer, who once lived in Bali for fove years. McPhee was very impressed with gamelan and Indonesia's variety of culture, thus he wrote a symphony for orchestra and two piano titled *Tabuh-Tabuhan/Drums*.

"We're full of local culture and music that are supposed to be exploited and admired better. Not only by foreign tourists or people abroad, but also by people in our own country," Aryo elaborated.

Indonesia also has created many distinguished musicians. Aryo mentioned pianist Esther who now lives and teaches in Canada, Eduardus Halim who became a professor in New York University, Ananda Sukarlan in Spain, and jazz pianist Nial Djuliarso. Aside from pianists, Indonesia is also full of big composers and singers. Aryo mentioned composer Tony Prabowo, Trisutji Kamal, Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Mochtar Embut.

"Then we also have singers like Aning Katamsi, Catharina Leimena, Binu Sukaman, and Bernadetta Astari whose careers soar in Europe. The list is still long. I'm sure there are still many other great artists and musicians, whose names I've never heard," he said.

In short, according to Aryo, Indonesia has many beautiful "pearls". But, according to him, like what his teacher once said, "There are many beautiful notes, very beautiful voices, but they're like separated pearls. What's the use of pearls if they don't have a strong string to unite them into a necklace?"

"My point is, we have many great talents but we still need to unite. The most important thing is, we need support and infrastructures from many sides—not only musicians, not only business players, but also government both domestic and abroad (embassies and consulates abroad). We artists love our work, and in reality we need a good system and support to be able to show our best abilities," said Aryo. In this case, he emphasized more on support from various sides toward art communities in the nation.