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Piano master returns home to perform with NSO

Sandra Siagian , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Sat, 10/03/2009 2:04 PM | Lifestyle

For the first time in 11 years, pianist Aryo Wicaksono will perform in Indonesia with the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra.

Monday's performance will also be the first time an Indonesian orchestra plays the Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26.

Aryo who has been playing and teaching music in the USA, said this performance is special not only for the orchestra but also for him, as the concerto was the first professional piece he ever learned, 10 years ago.

"I first learned the concerto when I was 17, so I have been quite familiar with it for a while" said the 26-year-old. "I love the piece so much, it's so much fun. I think the audience will be expecting a lot of fun with this piece which they will get, as this piece is so energetic yet has wonderful tender and sad moments as well."

The audience can expect a colorful evening thanks to the contrasting program filled with pieces from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Aryo said the first half will be filled with beautiful 20th century pieces (Prokofiev), while the second half will take music lovers back to the 19th century world of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, exploring the time of the Russian Empire.

"The beauty of the 20th century is the abstract things which are so out there, but at the same time really express what the era was about through the beautiful colors," Aryo

said about the first half. "The 19th century is a special piece to me as when I was in Russia performing, I would play the same concerto *from* Tchaikovsky in the second half of the show as well."

This is the first time Aryo will be working with Hikotaro Yazaki, the guest principal conductor and musical director of NSO. Aryo said he is very excited to work with Yazaki and hopes this won't be the last time.

"He has a lot of control with the orchestra which really shows as the musicians hold so much respect for him," said Aryo. "He is wonderful, nice and very humble and knows what he wants and how to conduct an orchestra without being mean."

"Watching him lead the orchestra showed such a great synergy, as he always works the orchestra as a whole unit and as a musical team, not just as a soloist, the conductor then the rest."

The talented pianist, speaking during a rehearsal Friday afternoon, had nothing but praise for the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra, whose performance he last saw three years ago.

"They have such good musical sense and phrasing," he said. "They understand the music, are very enthusiastic and even throughout the rehearsal, each take we did, they just got better and better."

The orchestra, which is made up entirely of Indonesians, is something that Aryo believes is very special for the country.

"When I go to Dubai and perform, their orchestra is filled with foreigners including people from Sweden, France and even with a German conductor," Aryo said. "We need to be proud of our country, as our orchestra is all just Indonesians."

After the performance, Aryo will continue to his hometown of Surabaya to perform and teach workshops for students and teachers.

Nusantara Symphony Orchestra will perform Monday night at the Balai Sarbini Concert Hall at 7:30 pm. Tickets range from Rp 100,000 to Rp 500,000. For more information, see www.nusantaraorchestra.com.